

Dessislav Valkanov



Knowledge  
and  
Freedom



# Knowledge and Freedom

## *Anamnesis*

*Anamnesis* means remembrance or reminiscence, the collection and recollection of what has been lost, forgotten, or effaced. It is therefore a matter of the very old, of what has made us who we are. But *anamnesis* is also a work that transforms its subject, always producing something new. To recollect the old, to produce the new: that is the task of *Anamnesis*.

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# Knowledge and Freedom: Essays in German Idealism

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# Preface

*Allmächtiger Geist, Urquell aller Wesen,  
Zeus, Oromazes, Brama, Jehova;  
Vorm ersten Äon bist du schon gewesen  
Und nach dem letzten bist Du auch noch da.  
Du rufst aus ödem Dunkel Licht und Helle,  
Aus wildem Chaos ein Elysium,  
Du winkst und sieh! ein Tempe wird zur Hölle  
Und eine Sonne hüllet Nacht ringsum.*

*Aus deinem Mund fließt Leben und Gedeihen  
In diesen Baum und in den Sirius  
Und Nahrung streust Du Myriaden Reihen  
Geschöpfen aus und freudigen Genuß.  
Ein Kind ruft seinen Vater an um Speise,  
Ward es auch gleich schon tausend Tage satt,  
Wenn ihm der Vater gleich den Trunk und Speise  
Auch ungebeten stets gegeben hat . . .<sup>1</sup>*

The lines belong to Novalis and I begin with them because, perhaps for the first time since Plato, they make it possible to reach the

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1. These are the opening lines of the poem 'Allmächtiger Geist, Urquell aller Wesen' from 1788–91. 'Almighty Spirit, primary source of all essences, / Zeus, Oromazd, Brahma, Jehova, / You are before the first eon and / after the last you are there again. / You call light and shine from bare darkness, / from wildest chaos—an Elysium. / You wink and see!—a temple becomes hell / and a sun is enveloped by night. / From your mouth spring life and benediction / in this tree and in Sirius. / And food you spread to myriads of orders / of creatures, and joyful delight. / A child calls its father for food, / though being full for thousand days, / since the father even though unasked / has food and drinks always already bestowed'.



essence of a philosophy through poetry. Philosophy, in this sense, is once again so powerful and rich in its content that it can manifest itself in all possible forms and directions. Another reason for this introduction is the special place of Novalis's works, which combined the impulses and thoughts of an entire generation and expressed them purely, subtly, in their most subjective and evocative form, *eo ipso*. Finally, because the life of Novalis embodies the character of the epoch not only of German Romanticism but also of German idealism.

The poem was probably written during his Jena period and reveals something that will later be seen in the various systems, constructions and 'movements of the concept'. The spirit of formalism, which we have grown used to identify with German idealism is, to a certain degree, a secondary trait. The form comes from the richness of the content and the fervour of the movement, and for that reason much of the clean and clear-cut order of the systems—in a geometrical mode, paragraphs, circles, etc.—is rather an expression of the struggle to master the centre and formalise something which, in its truth, is not formal and poses problems with regard to its comprehension. Fichte's pioneer attempts demonstrate this difficulty most clearly in his many *Wissenschaftslehre* introductions, but the challenge for both Schelling and Hegel is greater because they have to cope with the resistance of the entire material of science and philosophy and present systematically an ultimately ecstatic conception. Formalisation, especially in the younger Schelling, is the reflection of youth that wants to show seriousness and the work of a boundlessly poetic mind that wants to give science and achieve strict knowledge about the most elusive of subjects—the absolute.

The purpose of this book is close to the essence of the philosophical poetry of Novalis. It is an attempt to go beyond the form and reach the spirit which precedes it, an effort to see the factual—the treaties, the systems as inherited forms—as expositions of a still living tradition and as parts of an ongoing dialogue.

The investigation is led by a few central questions, the elucidation of which requires a closer look at the details and the foundations of transcendental thinking. These are the questions about knowledge and freedom given in the connection that lies at their base: *truth will make you free*. Thus, the more precise definition of my topic is truth, the seeking and expectation of it, the effort to go beyond consciousness in its immediate form in order to bring

forward something else, which will yield the sought after—freedom. Philosophy should offer freedom; it should restore and regain it through construction or speculation if it must, but still it should offer a real alternative path.

The inquiry follows this line of questioning. Going through some of the key texts of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, it searches for answers to the following questions: What is freedom? Why are we not free? Thus the question is reversed: What is consciousness? Why does it enclose itself in fixed, acquired forms? Why do our cognitive moves fail to bring us ahead? What does it mean to transcend ourselves, and on what can we depend to accomplish it? In short, questions about what is possible, what is allowed, and what is permitted to ask and hope for.

The focus is on the breakthrough in the understanding of freedom accomplished by the transcendental philosophy of Kant. The question about freedom is a question about knowledge, and for that reason the careful reconstruction of the architectonics of reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason* provides the grounds for an entry into the limitations of consciousness, which are also limitations of the practical, immediate condition of the human being. Hence, the present study follows the adoption and development of the transcendental perspective, which contains freedom as a constitutive element of both theoretical and practical discourses all the way from Kant to Hegel.

As to the form, the selected genre is that of the essay, sufficiently academic and yet underlying the moment of individual inquiry with its sincerity, unpretentiousness, and authenticity. I myself ask, seek, and try; what I want and what motivates me is clearly brought to the surface.

Perhaps a more fitting title of the text would be ‘Kantian mediations’, because Kant and my effort to rethink and truly accept Kant stand at the center of this study, but in the context of the enormous literature on German classical thought such a title would be too pretentious. This is still an attempt at a Kantian meditation, a conversation in which everything lies open, a study which does not seek comprehensiveness but depth, and displays all the signs of spontaneity and effort. In this sense, I follow the example of Plato and of his understanding of philosophy as a dialogue, an encounter, or a witness account. The immediacy of the form retains the immediacy of the inquiry, the simplicity of the questioning and the

response. The freedom of form is also freedom of knowledge itself, most appropriate for the purest and noblest of disciplines.

Nevertheless, the chosen approach is related to certain limitations. First, with regard to the interpretative framework which, after years of dealing with Hegel, remains influenced by certain Hegelian premises: a) the understanding of philosophy as a singular movement which is principally accessible for every consciousness ready to open itself to a different conceptual structure; b) the understanding of the unity of the subject of every philosophy in the light of which the separate systems appear as progressive approximations; and finally, c) the adoption of a certain self-validating context of the concepts of reason, freedom, universality, the absolute, which could be articulated in different directions (logical, moral, political). These are principles which are made explicit by Hegel but to a large degree are shared by the authors who precede him. In this sense, the main questions of German idealism are studied on its own ground. The reconstruction of the possible steps and positions is conducted in the light of the variations and elaborations developed afterwards, but growing out of the principal insights of this tradition, not outside of it.

Second, with regard to the theme, the main emphasis falls on a few principal questions and texts; other themes and possible connections are left aside. Thus, in connection to Hegel my interest is directed to the second part of the *Science of Logic* and to *Philosophy of Right*. The *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopaedia* as well as the formal aspects of the logic are not considered. With regard to Fichte and Schelling, the focus is on two main texts from their earlier periods and less on the complex developments afterwards. All this is done with a view of the broader educative purposes of the book.

The emphasis on certain points of interest is reflected in the structuring of the text. The first four essays are on Kant. The opening one deals with the concept of the given, the second—with the Kantian sense of confinement of our knowledge in experience. The third studies the consequences of the confined state of cognition for the search of a valid metaphysics. The fourth essay considers Kant's positive solution in the concept of moral freedom.

The two essays on Fichte present the major themes of his transcendental analysis: the search for a foundation of science in the dialectical notion of the 'I' and the issue of freedom. The fate of Fichte's discoveries and the attempt to couple them with a philosophy of

nature is the subject of the first of two essays on Schelling. The second returns to Kant and his warnings of the difficulties of building a system with a transcendentially valid foundation.

The study includes four essays on Hegel. The notion of subjectivity and the way Hegel inherits and develops it is the topic of the first. The second is devoted to the forces of dynamism of the system and the role of the notion of drive or urge (*Trieb*). The third essay is an impassionate presentation—impersonation—of Hegel's revised version of the absolute. All these issues are brought to the fore in the final discussion of Hegel's thesis of the actuality of freedom in the twin expositions of the idea in *Science of Logic* and *Philosophy of Right*.

The conclusion returns to the historical perspective and gives an overview of the entire movement. The figure of Spinoza is brought back as part of the evaluation of the stakes and the results of the uncompromising German quest for freedom and truth.



# KANT

We have only to take care to be at one with  
ourselves . . .

*Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), B 511



# Givenness

The problem with which Kant begins and which in a sense dominates the entire history of early modern philosophy is that of givenness and the physical, bodily nature of the world. Operating with concepts here is quite difficult because the uncertainty and the equivocation with regard to the real dimensions of the given touch on the very concepts with which we could proceed. The mystery of givenness, or rather, the mystery of our being ‘given’—a ‘world’, a ‘visible’, *res extensa* with fixed parameters of movement and change—is linked to the idea of a special task of reason, and to a perception of a certain path which has to be followed; a path which appears unknown and in which everything must be started from the beginning.

One can speak of a dominant disposition of thought or a primary concern, which forces one to abandon the existing positions of thought—the old ideas, concepts and automatic reactions of consciousness in metaphysics—in the name of something new and still not present, but promising to be adequate to the true dimensions of givenness and the nature of our relation to it. In historical perspective one can observe this disposition in Descartes, Hobbes, Leibnitz, Pascal, all the way to Kant. Everywhere one finds certain common features and themes of inquiry, and in following the impulses of this quest—of the best method, concepts and modes of defining the subject of the new science—one comes to the essence of the philosophy of modernity.

The problem of givenness, in Kant’s terminology, is a problem of intuition and the meaning of objectivity. Kant brings this question a few steps further and closer to the source of knowledge itself, up to the very essence of consciousness. The problem of the



givenness of objectivity—the extension in Descartes—is turned into a problem of the givenness of our representations (*Vorstellungen*) and so of our own inner dimension of ‘givenness’ and receptivity. Under scrutiny is not our relation to objectivity but our relation to the intuition of it as the common root of our knowledge and restless quests of the truth of thinking and its object.

Let us take a step back to the inquiries of Galileo and Descartes. The problem there is the overpowering sense of uncertainty and the lack of understanding of the visible. One knows nothing about it; its parameters, volume, extension, duration and internal laws are yet to be discovered. The only thing one can point to is the awareness of the infinite complexity of the task to measure, define and reconstruct in reason the intellectual structure of the world. Here too, at least at the beginning, the emphasis falls primarily on the bodily, material nature of things, and less on the more complex task of grasping the measure of living beings. Later on, when this enters the scope of scientific concern, the addition will transform the organisation of the already accumulated knowledge of the new science. Schelling, Novalis, and Hegel will search more persistently the dimensions of the givenness of the living and from there will reach a different sense of the dimensions of the ultimate foundation—the absolute, the idea. What is givenness? How far does it extend as a principal relation? How is it organised? And how does it function? What would be at the centre of everything?

This set of questions immediately becomes positioned around the subject of the right method and the manner in which one is to approach its object. The question is what can be done, and this, in reverse, opens the problem of the understanding of our own nature and the task to investigate the workings of human reason in the perspective of givenness. The orientation from Descartes onwards relies on certain directions for progress and attempts for a breakthrough. The chosen path is one of mathematics and with it, of physics and the other natural sciences as sciences of application. A conscious decision is taken not to rely on the available body of knowledge (metaphysics, theology) in order to continue ahead. The attempt to follow mathematics in relation to the dimensions of the given—to extension—leads to a continuous evolution of the mathematical knowledge and distancing from the simpler elements of the mathematics of the ancients.

Here one could view physics as a separate path since such a separation was indeed sought, but for the purposes of the inquiry, it is easier to stress the applied and essentially incomplete kind of knowledge which physics still represents at the time. Physics, as pursued in the philosophy of early modernity, is more the ideal of a science as a separate discipline, which could advance according to its own rules. It slowly reaches this status but for Kant the question of the sources of its principles and the way in which its methods evolve, is still open, constantly causing movement in other directions, including that of metaphysics.

The problem of givenness leads to rediscovery of the virtues of the first science. This is the proper discipline for dealing with the problem of givenness, the kind of knowledge that can draw the lines of enquiry and define the choices that have to be made. Seen from a metaphysical point of view, geometry is a search and so is physics; in both cases there is a choice of perspective and a specific idea of knowledge. In order to accomplish it, one narrows the perspective and as a result each discipline must be considered along with the others in order to preserve the original dimension of authenticity in relation to the whole and the beginning. The hardening of scientific outlook, the concept of absoluteness of the object and methods of the exact sciences is a later development, undermined by the dynamics of discovery in the works of Gödel, the theory of relativity and quantum physics in the early twentieth century.

#### I.

The problem of mathematics is a problem of the adequacy of the measure and the search for a sufficiently flexible formula which could comprise the given in material sense and retain the complexity of the processes and dependencies which can be observed there. In a more general sense, the central problem here is one of intuition; the task is to go beyond intuition and its data, beyond visibility. The task is, according to the approach of mathematics, to calculate the given and give solidity to what corresponds, or must correspond, to the new concepts of metaphysics: extension, mass, velocity, etc.; new not by origin but by intention, needed to grasp the indeterminate character of the given.

The new concepts contain less and sound abstract, but precisely their abstractness and neutrality in reference to the established positions of thinking is their main merit. 'Extension' signifies the

elemental dimension of intuitiveness, i.e., mass or solid matter and its satiation with sensual characteristics. Already in Leibnitz, this concept is made more precise with the introduction of the concept of difference of appearances and things in themselves, which is to become the main theme of the methodological division in Kant.

One cannot speak of objects in a direct perspective, because what is 'given' in this way comes fully determined and consolidated in experience, carrying information not about its essence, but about the circumstances of its givenness and mode of visibility. For that reason, the materiality of givenness is deliberately chromatic, abstract and simplified in its presentation. This is seen most clearly in Descartes and in a more refined manner later in Leibnitz. In both cases, however, there is a conscious decision to retain the perspective of indeterminacy of the intuitable and the available in empirical perspective. The choice of a more primary position here is a return to the original moment of experience, before the automatic suppression of the awareness of the particular manner of givenness of objectivity itself. In order to preserve this original determination of the real, or at least, a more adequate sense of the dimensions of objectivity, one needs a *novum organum*: new concepts, new understanding of science, and new instrumentarium, which from now on is that of mathematics and experimentation. This move implies also a new attempt for the development of metaphysics in relation to mathematics with the frequent mentioning of which opens the *Critique of Pure Reason* itself.

Yet, if the perspective of development in mathematics and physics is relatively clear, what happens with metaphysics is not, if anything because there the effort to advance further does not lead to cumulative knowledge in the proper sense of the word. There the very notion of re-orientation or revolution, as it is directly put by Kant, carries in itself an element of deviation and specialising in the secondary presupposed under given conditions. Thus, an essential part of the set of questions, uncertainties and intuitions which stand before Kant is lost despite the clarity with which he attempts to present them. Still, something of the ambiguous character of the primary problem of indeterminacy is preserved in the Kantian formulations of the secondary or derivative nature of philosophical thinking, and its presence can be observed in the most ambitious projects after him all the way to Hegel.

2.

To sum up, the main problem is how to transform the intuited—the *Anschauung*, the visible of Plato—in thought, in knowledge. Here this would mean in pure, universal, necessary knowledge. Intuition is given, and with it is given the representation (experience). Yet precisely that—the availability of intuition, the presence of experience as a system of representations ordered and cognised in this way—is a problem. Experience is always based on intuition and receptivity, and thus on limitation in the sense that thought (cognition, the conceptual determination) comes after or along with intuition. For Kant, our knowledge begins and remains in experience. Our spontaneity—the pure activity of reason—is related to this givenness and is essentially experience of intuitiveness, of the attempt to handle intuition, make sense of it and bring it under a rule, i.e., under the unconditional in the series of conditions. Hence here—and with this is set out the task of the critique—we have another ‘unconditional’, another ‘first’ of our cognition: intuition itself.<sup>1</sup> For Kant, we remain close to or with it in thinking, which no matter how expanded spontaneously or methodologically must at the end in a certain way relate to experience. ‘Thoughts without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.’ Yet, behind this scheme is visible the original orientation and the need for elaboration of a stance. This fullness, this satiation of our concepts with intuitiveness: Is it enough? What does it give? And what does it mean from the point of view of metaphysics to always have this intuitiveness, this presence ready at hand?

In a certain sense for Kant intuitiveness is a task. It is related to the givenness of objectivity which we know—as we learn more and more through the progress of specialised sciences—to possess multiple dimensions relative to the progress we make. Here at the foundation stands something which in the distance from intuition and the simple references to extension and movement becomes more and more abstract and dependent on the manner in which we try

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1. Intuition is conditioned and is something derivative, but in the structure of our knowledge it has primary significance. Our human intuition ‘is only sensitive, that is so far as we are affected by objects’ ‘since sensible intuition is a quite specific subjective condition which lies a priori at the foundation of all perception, as its original form’ (I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1992, B 52, 324).

to identify and measure it. This makes physics impossible as absolute science; its sense of its dimensions and foundations—in the way they are shown by Kant in the antinomies—remain conditional, a matter of transcendental necessity. Science of nature is found to be drawn in the observed movement of givenness, bound to the search of that which stands behind intuition and the measured, conceptualised elements of experience.

The problem for Kant is precisely the elusive identification of the given, the essence of intuitiveness. Otherwise it—the intuitiveness of the world, of things, of experience—remains the same, a set of confirmed indisputable representations, which give us time and space and a world defined in internal sense. Added to this is the accumulated body of scientific knowledge—the body of our disciplined relation to objectivity—which we have become used to accept, and from which we have to abstract ourselves as a first step towards mastering the principles of any new discipline. This is a new mass of ‘given’, this time in the mode of experiential cognition, where the objective is made to demonstrate what has been deduced prior to that as a principle of objectivity and bring it to visibility, to experience; this time, to a controlled, premeditated experience from a concept, which we want to objectify and observe as appearance, or as the conceptualised content of thought.

Nevertheless, for Kant science remains only one of the modes of orientation; it is practice (*Tätigkeit*) in expansion and deepening of our knowledge. Its progress does not help us much with regard to the principles and dimensions of intuitiveness as the primary element of cognition. Science itself seeks its first ground and finds in its concepts of ‘unconditional’ and ‘totality of completion’ only principles of orientation and regulation. For metaphysics the task is left open, because, as it seems, only it can retain the awareness for actuality not as ‘being’, ‘objectivity’ or some other absolute determination, but as indeterminacy, an overwhelming and troubling givenness. This is indeterminacy seen as a presence in which there is no play of cognitive faculties and the notions of the sublime and the beautiful, but only a frightening weightlessness of our conceptual and sensuous representations and inability to think what we want and need to understand.<sup>2</sup>

This indeterminacy is not a boundary of thought in the sense of objectivity but rather an opening to tasks which reason is not ready

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2. God, immortality, freedom.

to perform, a pull towards an inner centre which it can sustain only partially, as an impulse. This gives birth to a choice: the choice of direction, of limited behaviour amidst the necessity of total unfolding of thought.

It is precisely this necessity to expand simultaneously in all directions in order to master the thinkable that explains the amazing internal connection in the philosophy of modernity and the explorations of Descartes, Leibnitz, and Spinoza in physics, mathematics, mechanics, optics, biology, etc. This interest towards everything and ability to go beyond the norms and the established methods of science is related to the concept of a truly revolutionary change, which translates into a search of a new road ahead and the consideration of the available content of sciences—even in terms of problems and perspectives—as insufficient and inadequate. The problem is the loss of vigour and the settling into the comfort of the inherited categories and achievements of the past. At the basis of every true quest for truth stands a primary determination or strive defined as *Trieb* by Fichte. It is the determination to make sense of givenness behind or within intuition and go beyond the mystery of intuitivity and our attachment to it.

In Kant we find the articulation of the themes and the paths that have been taken and the presentation of metaphysics as a task, demanding unity with the other sciences and their quests. For him, the problem with metaphysics lies in the opposite way, in the pull of intuition and the remaining power of receptivity. Of course, with Kant, we have nowhere else to go. Everything that we learn about the actual objects of experience is the result of division; a product of the work with experience and the study of its possibilities, in contrast with the possibilities of our purely metaphysical statements. Thus in Kant we stay with experience as an open field of givenness as a presence which has to be formulated and cognised, and a field of intuitiveness, which has to be put under the conceptual determination of reason.

However, in Kant there is something else which makes the study of the details of his return to experience such a primary subject for philosophy. The analysis of the openness of thought generates the metaphysical orientation of thinking and necessarily leads to reaction: to the seeking of the unconditional in the series of conditions and the urgent need of thoughts without intuitions, i.e., of pure philosophical principles and positions.

The antinomies are the final result of an investigation of the initial standpoint initiated by the problem of givenness and the enigma of determinacy (experience). In this sense, metaphysics for Kant becomes an exercise in self-understanding of reason and of its own sources as meta-science, as need. Metaphysics requires taking position in relation to the un-positionable, towards what is impossible to fix in a position, a matter of spontaneous choice and decision in the face of the absence of a real grasp of its object.

Intuition, with which Kant begins, stands at the end too, generating with its presence all the complex reaction of giving, spontaneity, and reason. Fichte reduces things to the dialectical formula of the thought-determinations I, non-I, and their identity but in placing the I at the centre of the inquiry something of the elusive indeterminacy of the totality of thinking reverts to the background. What disappears from view is the subtle interplay of indeterminacy and determination, and the continuing presence of indeterminacy—as a concept and a principle of a priori knowledge in terms like intuition, schematism and things in themselves—in the structuring of cognition.

Sciences and the abstract quests of mathematics, understood as operation with pure quantities and dependencies, are built on the basis of precisely this kind of determinacy, out of the elements of the uncertain givenness of experience. Something is given; in the appearance something somehow is really there by itself, for our mind, and precisely this givenness is what we have to bring to clarity and lead to a concept, to thought. Yet this movement eludes us. We perform it automatically in experience, but what it yields is an expanded image of givenness bearing the characteristics of our own sensibility and the a priori principles of the understanding. The concept of extension of Descartes is made more general in order to define the objectivity of the sensuous and underlie the only thing that we could claim with certainty about the character of objectivity: it is a manifold which comes to our consciousness 1) as an image, as sensed and intuited, which we then proceed to define beyond receptivity, and 2) reversely, as a concept, thought, confirmed and made available in intuition.

Intuition gives content; it offers itself, but this 'itself' is precisely what we cannot understand and cannot properly think. Perhaps, this is the message of Kant: God, world, immortality, or taken in their perhaps more obscure, but also more original and, therefore,

adequate expression as 'the given' or the 'noumenon', cannot be cognised. This means that the manner in which we think is by losing the pure a priori clarity which we know from moral autonomy. In its theoretical use, reason slides into the matrix of the synthetic modes of operation of the concepts which always remain given in the indeterminate finitude of experience, as undetermined or undecided concepts.

When all the work of cognition is done, intuition still remains; it is available, and so is thinking as bound to it. Thus, givenness manifests itself as a boundary, barring the possibility of a real progress and actual opening of thought. Intuition appears as an extraction, not as an element of truth or as the available half that could bring from itself the unity and fullness of the whole. With this we reach the question of the status of the unity of intuition and thought, and of the dimensions of rationality 'possible for us, humans'.





# Confinement

We begin with the Kantian sense of confinement of man in his knowledge. This confinement is double. It is first confinement from the side of intuition (*Anschauung*) because in it what exists—whatever it may be in itself (*an sich*)—becomes accessible in the form of an empirical, sensualised unity of the manifold of experience and the pure forms of time and space, and not in the way it may unfold itself in its inherent dimension.<sup>1</sup> This implies the necessity to *feel* what one ought to *think* because one finds oneself incapable of proceeding otherwise in knowledge. Furthermore, confinement implies the obligation to have intuitions of what we might, theoretically, grasp in pure concepts. Put simply, an intuition (*Anschauung*) is a ‘looking-at’ or ‘look-on’, given and so exterior to us irrespective of how determinate it could become in representation (*Vorstellung*) and understanding (*Verstand*). The way something appears, the *sight* of a thing or being, is still extrinsic to the (projected) essence of that thing or being.

Second, there is confinement from the side of the concept, which ‘in us’ requires an intuition and is formed or enacted in relation to

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1. ‘What we have meant to say is that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; that the things which we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being; nor their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us, and that if the subject, or even only the subjective constitution of the senses in general be resolved, the whole constitution and all the relations of objects in space and time, nay space and time themselves, would vanish. As appearances, they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. . . We know nothing but our own mode of perceiving them—a mode which is peculiar to us, and not necessarily shared in by every being. With this alone have we any concern . . .’ (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 59–60).

it. This is the thesis of the ‘blindness’ of our concepts, which can be developed—followed analytically, or in their application, synthetically—in their connection to empirically given intuitions. The concepts, even when given in their purity and logical qualities in a single system, do not give anything more than themselves. They delineate possible contents and relations which are entirely linked to experience and need intuitions to be complete, real and meaningful.

‘Given’ (*Gegeben*) in figurative sense means that our thinking is representational, that we relate to presentations as semi-images or empirically determined contents, which through the manifold of the particular material and their own power as affects, set our thinking in the search of determinations, relations and completeness—completeness imposed by reason but called for by the presence of the empirical intuition.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, for Kant, we have a certain identity in cognition, a thought-through presence of objectivity where intuition and concept are given as one and are determined additionally in the horizon of a clarified and cognised whole (totality). The impossibility to access the things in themselves is obscured by the availability of the secondary, re-produced knowledge and the unity of what is given to us in the perspective of experience. This implies the replacement of the indeterminacy of the experienced and sensed—the given in the manifold of intuition, from there on conceived in the pure concepts of the understanding—by the determinacy of an, in effect, intuitive-conceptual re-construction of objectivity. This is how reason attains completeness and achieves inclusion of sensations in an unbroken succession under the unity of the re-constructed, posited objectivity. Thinking provides determinacy, repetitiveness, and, therefore, ‘transparency’ within the standards of clarity of cognition in experience. The categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality are concepts, which unify the streams of sensations. They provide coherence and produce a new intuitiveness complete and clarified. This is the intuitiveness of a ‘rational’ objectivity, i.e., of a world of experience in its totality, the ‘natural world’ of the human being.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Thinking must provide the form of unity; matter (the manifold of experience) is given itself in intuition. Reason must subdue the given in intuition to create unity and coherence, to define it in the identity of consciousness and in relation to the totality of the transcendental ideas.

3. They are semi-rational because the other half is provided by intuition. For Kant, ours is an applied, embedded rationality, unlike the rationality of a divine intellect.

The unity of objectivity, the presence of a world that we know and relate to aesthetically or practically is the unity of reason. Pointing to it, we arrive at the other, active element and the articulation of the self-positing whole of cognition from the side of activity. Kant gives thorough consideration to this duality of experience; receptivity and spontaneity are given in a relation which unfolds in sensuous intuition and is further determined in thought. This is a duality where spontaneity is constrained in intuition and sensation and develops itself as a relation of intuitions, and a movement following the thread of the posited.

Reason provides the totality of the chain of construction of cognition—the constituting of the known (the objects), then, the difference of the given from thinking in its subjective dimension (the I and the understanding as faculty for relation of representations). So what we possess as knowledge and what the critical analysis begins with is the completeness of the chain of construction of knowledge: the offering of the *known*, of a mode of relating to it (as activity, cognition) and the identity of the knowing subject (the I).

In Kant the marking off of those sides is only conditional and done entirely within the frame of transcendental analytic. The dramatisation and hardening of these distinctions belong to a later period, especially to Hegel. In Kant the emphasis lies elsewhere: on the interrelation of the elements identified in the perspective of transcendental analytic with the matter of empiria, i.e., with the givenness of experience, the ready presence of the ‘result’ from which they, retrospectively, are being derived. This is the source of the constantly underlined inability of thinking to advance in its pure use and of the necessity to think through the parameters of the given (the intuition).

Thinking makes the transition between representations and between objects of cognition, which at their base are identified, fixed units of the manifold of intuition. In the foundation of everything that we have as ready, available representations, around which our thinking revolves, lies the individualising, grounding layer of receptivity. This presence of sensation (the reception of intuition) is taken on and turned into a perception of a thing, an object. After that, with the relation to other objects of this kind, appears the notion of completeness and of the totality of a ‘world’<sup>4</sup> of objects open in time

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4. ‘[The world] exists only in the empirical regress of the series of appearances, and is not to be met with as something in itself’ (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*,

and space—a totality of a representation-based objectivity, which carries all the characteristics of ‘our, human way of knowledge’: a) the element of sensitivity (in the effect of the ‘coming’ of the manifold of experience, the occurrence of a presence intuited and felt), and b) the element of spontaneity (the activity of thinking in determining and construing the representation through tracing out the relations in the given through the categories).

This openness of the world of experience is, in effect, openness of the representation and sign of its peculiar status of a created, generated unity, not the result of an internal act of cognition where the concept itself yields intuition and sustains the object as an intuitive aspect of the same intellect and part of the dimension of thought, of the idea.<sup>5</sup>

In a sense, the true dimension of the entire analytic of consciousness is revealed in Kant’s critical examination of dialectics, i.e., in the attempts of reason to reach a limit in its activity of determination. It is in this process that the inherent confines of the pure concepts and the systematic unity that they present are unfolded. For Kant, our concepts are always concepts of the sensual; they are determinations of intuition, acts *after*, acts *with* or acts *over* the empirical. This is the basis that fits in, wholesale, in experience. Thinking is spontaneous, free in its relation to the manifold of empirical intuition in a particular fact (act) of sensation. One may indeed *think* the givenness of intuition, pure or empirical; one may inquire about it and set goals of that inquiry; cognition may become a goal and this type of purposive relation to objects occurs constantly in experience. Yet, the character of this cognitive movement is that of transit

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B 533). Transcendental ideas which constitute the natural for us sense of completeness in general are called ‘heuristic fictions’ (B 799).

5. ‘This principle is not, however, to be taken as applying to every possible understanding, but only to that understanding through whose pure apperception, in the representation ‘I am’, nothing manifold is given. An understanding in which through its self-consciousness could apply to itself the manifold of intuition—an understanding, that is to say, through whose representation the objects of the representation should at the same time exist—would not require, for the unity of consciousness, a special act of synthesis of the manifold. For the human understanding, however, which thinks only, and does not intuit, that act is necessary. It is indeed the first principle of the human understanding, and is so indispensable to it that we cannot form the least conception of any other possible understanding, either of such as is itself intuitive or of any that may possess an underlying mode of sensible intuition which is different in kind from that in space and time’ (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 139).

or transfer—with the help of concepts as functions of unity of the action of relating and ordering the manifold of certain representations—through the manifold itself.

Concepts are not strictly bound up to a particular field of objectivity. There is no concreteness in them since the very essence of the human knowledge is one of duality and division between concept and intuition. Thus, our concepts are given as forms of relation (*Verbindung*) of the manifold of intuition, as functions of unity and are, for that particular reason, empty in themselves. They order representations and operate with something present and continuously given. The same set of categories controls the chains of already interconnected manifold, passes through the already generated representations, and shifts from one intuition to the next, moving through the elements constructed out of determined representations.

What reason possesses are concepts of relations unfolding themselves in endless series of syntheses and levels of unity. The concepts are the binding element of representations, the link of the given in the perspective of passivity or intuition. They, in themselves, are neutral to the finite determination of their content, since it does not belong (fully) to them. Categories connect the given; in representation they *define* givenness, which—in the pure dimension of transcendental analytic—remains indeterminate as objectivity in itself (*an sich*).

Thus, for Kant, the openness of the concepts in a way implies lack of content, hollowness in the pure determination of reason as intellectual capacity.<sup>6</sup> The ability to begin with intuition, to receive and to think the empirical within the bounds of the unity of the system of categories, entails inability to attain true unity or knowledge beyond the settings of the primary ground of sensation. The movement of the object of thought in experience, as perceived of in the perspective of transcendental dialectic, appears as sliding on the surface of representations: a movement over the texture of the *given*, fixed along the lines of connection of the determinations of thought.

Hence, although in the concrete metrics of experience thinking advances through a series of causal relations and regularities,

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6. 'So long as intuition is lacking, we do not know whether through the categories we are thinking an object, whether indeed there can anywhere be an object suited to them. In all these ways, then, we obtain confirmation that the categories are not in themselves knowledge, but are merely forms of thought for the making of knowledge from given intuitions' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 288).

in a succession of cognitions unfolding experience in depth, still in a transcendental sense, it all remains a movement within the same space of re-presentation and re-construction. Reason remains within the confines of essentially the same product of receptivity and spontaneity constructed between the two poles of our knowledge: a) 'things in themselves' (always related in a certain undefined way to our capacity for sensation, always present, requiring activity, processing, elaboration), and b) thinking itself, 'the I' or 'of ourselves' as sensuous, but also, as determining, thinking subjects, imposing completeness and clarity of the intuited and the cognised.

The problem of metaphysics begins with this movement, with the indeterminacy of the received and the re-presented within the bounds of experience. Through the concepts we remain in the grasp of the same product of relation, which is the result of synthesis of the manifold of intuition under the neutral unity of the category. Neither of the two sides in this unity is truly linked and fused in a way that could remove the traces of the difference of their origin.<sup>7</sup> Concepts do not come from intuition; intuitions do not come from concepts. The link comes later; it is posited, added up. It brings unity by instituting an object of experience in an ordered, and, in the aspect of this givenness, an 'open and infinite' world.

This link (*Verbindung*) sets the standard for objectivity of intuition and conceptuality, for comprehensibility, but this standard is provisional and functions only in a single dimension, on one metaphysical level: the level of experience, of 'our own' human idea of thinking, objectivity and truth.<sup>8</sup> The confinement of our knowledge in this one-dimensional representation-breeding unity of experience, however, creates the restlessness of the human condition, our uneasy state as thinking and feeling beings, because it coexists in a paradoxical manner with openness at the sources of the living scheme of experience: the 'things in themselves' as source of

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7. They remain 'two very dissimilar elements' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 118) and their connection is described as addition, bringing to unity, and an act of synthesis. For that reason they can easily be viewed in isolation. This is a principal point of the critique and the transcendental philosophy as a science where 'no concepts [should] be allowed to enter which contain in themselves anything empirical' (B 28) and the purpose of which is 'to understand, in their whole extent, the principles of a *priori* synthesis, with which alone we are called upon to deal' (B 26).

8. One can almost hear Kant saying about metaphysics: 'Human ... all too human'.

receptivity, of sensations which wrapped in re-presentations of experience give the onset (onslaught) of desire, and the *I* or 'we ourselves' (whoever or whatever we may be on our own), where through the aspect of the will appears the idea of the search of truth itself.

The result of the principal indeterminacy at the poles—the poles of experience as a closed system of interrelated representations and levels of difference—is the activation and internal expansion of experience. Art, religion and philosophy as metaphysics are the headings of disciplines through which the open pole of subjectivity seeks reassembling of the totality of re-presentations, rearrangement of experience. Thus, from the side of the inquiring, restless, thinking and sensing subject emerges a new type of experience, which is not a product of the secondary laws of unity and which bears the marks of an active, self-conscious subjectivity seeking to find or build objectivity. In art, this objectivity is created, brought out of the material of the manifold of intuition, generating different chains of connection, unconstrained by the mechanical action of the categories. The aim is to produce or induce intuition and give an object to the concept. This is the way intuition is given in the works of poetry, in the fixed imagery of fine art, etc. In religion there is a similar awareness of the inadequacy and principal limitations of experience in relation to the drive of subjectivity towards an absolute unity, since all that could be given as levels of totality in experience, fails to provide more than a mediated notion of the same, a semblance of wholeness.

At this point, it is sufficient to only point out those spheres without going into details; what is important is the inability of experience to sustain the dimension of finality and completeness which it projects. Metaphysics, as a science, ceases to be a subjective need or an individual necessity, despite the fact that it is born individually and becomes an object of inquiry in this way. After the critique, it becomes the awareness of the incompleteness of the complete, of the indeterminacy of the determined, i.e., objectivity and the world itself.

The problem which Kant has simultaneously opened and closed for us is precisely this special, dual character of the concept-intuition and from here, of the deeper, immeasurably differing status of objectivity, not the objectivity of the re-presentations of objects of experience, in which everything (their place in space and time, relation to the other objects in a world) stems from us, but the



objectivity of the substrate beyond sensations, the objectivity without a human face, without sensation. For this objectivity we know nothing and can produce no meaningful concept.<sup>9</sup> And yet this is the dimension we fall in at the moment of breakdown of the foundations of experience, a dimension which remains in some peculiar way accessible to us in the indeterminacy of the spontaneity of the I, which we call as if implying something determinate, 'we, ourselves', and which attains—and could always attain in distinction to any experience, objectivity or world—its own particular expression in relation to others like ourselves: the expression of practical, moral freedom.

Just as the presence of the re-presentation (*Vorstellung*) or of experience on its own cannot sublate the things in themselves as a continuous (projected) source of sensations, so the presence of experience and of the acts of understanding cannot remove the indeterminacy of the self. The attention to this aspect becomes a hyper-attention later on in Fichte but its principal elements are a part of the complex picture of the critical analysis of Kant. The points that Kant himself emphasises concern the organisation of the critique as 'a rigorous science', that is, as a discipline which must ground and bring to accomplishment the plan of a transcendental analysis of knowledge, and through it, prepare a different kind of metaphysics as a foundation for the principles of the sciences and moral philosophy.

So attention shifts from the study of the possibility of the product—the given unity of the representations of experience—to the study of the sources of the drive towards another possible product, metaphysics. For Kant, the very model of metaphysics as dogmatic is an ersatz and a substitute, offering something that cannot be had. Precisely the presence of experience and the work of the understanding in introducing the function of unity in the manifold of intuition create the need for metaphysics. The task is to open the internal core of experience and expose the concept behind the intuited concepts and the authentic dimension of the re-presentation. It is because the representation has appeared and the concept-intuition has been generated that we need metaphysics; we need a concept

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9. '[T]he domain that lies out beyond the sphere of appearances is for us empty. . . . The concept of a noumenon is thus a merely limiting concept, the functions of which are to curb the pretensions of sensibility, and it is therefore only of negative employment' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 311).

about the concepts of our understanding and thinking of thinking itself. All of this becomes necessary because our knowledge is receptive-spontaneous, and in effect amounts to the act of unfolding of the representations of experience.

Arriving at this point, I feel reluctant to speak about God because in the perspective in which Kant operates there is a conscious decision to abstain from certain implied and almost explicit positions. In a certain sense, the entire first part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is remarkable with how close one is to a principal understanding of God, and yet how little from this suggested conception finds its way directly into the text despite the constant employment of notions like 'our, human way' of cognition and the contrast to a different, divine mode of the same, possessing of intellectual intuition. Thus, a problematic concept is used for structuring the principal statements of the critique.<sup>10</sup>

As a result there are, it seems, two alternative treatments of speculative theology in Kant: one (immanent, operative) at the beginning, given in the introduction and the section on transcendental aesthetic, and another, already deduced (explicit, thematic), brought about as a result of the inquiry as an ideal of human reason. The first concerns the concept of God as a condition for the very idea of a critique, the second—as a condition of cognition within the set principles of transcendental analysis. The former is the more important of the two because in it Kant has no opportunity to act along the lines of the didactic strategies of refutation which dominates the exposition of the result and instead is obliged to rely on the principal points of the critique as a project in a manner which requires the use of concepts in a raw, unprocessed way. The critique still needs to become a philosophy, a system and in this becoming it is authentic, un-premeditated in its result, open to its problematic in a way which disappears in the course of its realisation.

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10. See E. Fink, 'Operative and Thematic Concepts in Husserl's Phenomenology', in W. McKenna, R. Harlan and L. Winters (eds), *A priori and World. European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology*, trans. W. McKenna, The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981, 56–70.



# Metaphysics as Need

Given the analysis of duality one comes to a further set of questions: Do we really seek metaphysics? Do we really want to know? Or perhaps—taking our clues from the way Kant speaks about metaphysics as inclination, necessity or interest of reason—we use metaphysics to hide, attempting (feigning) a search for the absolute in a way which we know in advance cannot succeed? Thus, the question is: Do we, instead of truth, seek only a higher sanction of our experience, confirmation of our ‘reality’ and ‘ourselves’, as a deduction of the experienced and lived through, the familiar? Do we want truth or rather reproduction of the notions generated in the confined spontaneity of experience?

The questions point to the continuing constitutive function of the faculty of imagination and the schematism of the pure concepts. The latter lays the ground for the synthetic unity of experience and by following its development one attains the dimensions of the whole and reach of its boundaries. Metaphysics delineates these boundaries and in the act of its strive for completion reasserts the fullness and consistency of what is produced through the scheme. It does not alter the direction; it is not a turn in the initiated progression. It is a continuation following the outlines and measurements of the content.

Thus, in a sense metaphysics revolves around the self-giving of the scheme and the act of synthesis. *Self-giving* because what we have here is a product of the special, intermediary faculty of cognition—imagination<sup>1</sup>—and the work of the unifying power of the understanding, i.e., a process of constituting the foundation which, after

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1. See M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. J. S. Churchill, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

that, can only be hardened and conformed with. Yet, the product remains at the basis and it grounds the ensuing build up of experience in its external dimensions. Therefore, when later there comes the emergence of the individual quest for knowledge and truth, the desire to reach the end and the unconditional, this quest might be perceived as driven by what is imparted in its depths, proscribed inside the measures of the schematism of the concepts, i.e., by the type of knowledge, objectivity and sensibility which arises there.

To be sure, it is not clear how exactly transcendental imagination plays this role and to what extent, with Heidegger, it is made to be playing it. Yet regardless of the difference between the A and B editions of the first *Critique* and Kant's view on the exact function of transcendental imagination, there remains the fact of the grounding, unconditional character of the temporalisation of sensibility. The very act of sensation is given in the dimensions of time, of the internal sense, and the encounter of that *given* with the *giving*, the juncture of the determination and the limit which occurs there, sets the overall parameters of what will later grow out as experience. For that reason, experience in its external form as natural attitude—the simple consciousness of a world taken without mediation and reflection—bares the traits of its genesis and the indeterminacy which remains at its root.

The work at the foundation and the consciousness demonstrated in the product itself—experience—are directly related. If the genesis were of a different kind, the product would have not sustained the sense of confinement and restlessness and striving as the 'natural disposition' of human reason.<sup>2</sup> It all follows from the character of its constitution through the scheme and the subsequent synthetic unity of experience. And therefore, precisely because of this character of striving, there is a limit and an engendered failure, since the product—the knowledge of experience, the awareness of ourselves, for a world, and an absolute—cannot go beyond the formative principles of its production. This is the point where one reaches a different understanding of the search and an alternative dimension of the striving towards knowledge: the look inside, the turn inwards. Instead of following the overt parameters of the scheme one seeks a reverse, a turn away from the pre-given direction of seeking.

Kant brings us to a repudiation of the idea of seeking and the expectation of the sought after in metaphysics. In this lies his

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2. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 56–57.

negativism, the destructive side of the critical philosophy so often noted by his contemporaries, which can be explained with the fact that for them metaphysics was a much closer orientation of thinking and an in-built structure of their rational experience. With us, there is distance, both from Kant and from the tradition which he demolished from inside. Yet, here the nuances are important. Kant terminates the mechanical mode of search offered by metaphysics. He does not renounce metaphysics with the argument that its otherwise sound project can never be implemented, as if by itself it were beyond equivocation. The essence of the critical reverse lies elsewhere; it implies a change of attitude towards the type of search and the form of knowledge which has gone on under that title. The genesis of the idea of metaphysics as the exposition of the whole of our a priori knowledge in a systematic unity has to be understood and the understanding of what it truly is makes possible the acceptance of the result.<sup>3</sup> It does not mean the surrender of the idea of knowledge, of hope, but rather the refusal to follow the secondary, and, in a certain sense, illusory notion of knowledge, the decision not to follow what we have inherited as a proscribed path to a satisfying ignorance.<sup>4</sup>

This poses a question which is not asked directly but which, nevertheless, follows from the manner of Kant's presentation: Do we truly care about truth? Do we really seek it? It is not asked whether we have a 'natural striving', 'desire' or 'drive' by which we feel led in a certain direction—in a driven spontaneity towards metaphysics—but whether we are truly conscious and therefore free in our philosophical inquiries? Is not the fact that we have achieved so little and yet feel so comfortable within the options of a worldview offered by

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3. 'The unity of reason is the unity of system; and this systematic unity does not serve objectively as a principle that extends the application of reason to objects, but subjectively as a maxim that extends its application of reason to objects, but subjectively as a maxim that extends its application to all possible empirical knowledge of objects. Nevertheless, since the systematic connection which reason can give the empirical employment of the understanding not only furthers its extension, but also guarantees its correctness, the principle of systematic unity is so far also objective, but in an indeterminate manner (*principium vagum*). It is not a constitutive principle that enables us to determine anything in respect of its direct object, but only a merely regulative principle and maxim, to further and strengthen in infinitum (indeterminately) the empirical employment of reason' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 708).

4. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 607.

its history related to the weakness of our resolve and the ambiguity of the motivation to search for 'the truth', 'a truth', the going beyond, meta physics?

Kant is quite reverential to Hume and pays enormous attention to his arguments, even when they seem weakened by the transcendental perspective. One of these seemingly simple and, therefore, seemingly tractable points concerns causality and its link to cognitive habits. Going into the depths of Kant's analysis not only of the category of causality but of the mechanism of generation and consolidation of the representation (*Vorstellung*) as a whole in schematism, one can observe the execution, albeit with a greater precision and thoroughness, of a study of the same phenomenon of automatism and misconception. The very notion of causality is *given*, already at hand, already present; it is a principle which we apply and which we trust, which we follow as a pure theoretical law, as it is with Hume. However, if we leave aside the alleged psychologism and logical weakness of Hume's argumentation, what remains is the validity of his observation. Kant offers a deeper explanation of the same phenomenon. With him we have similar inconclusiveness of the sources of the known. The product is one, the sources are two, although they may have some undisclosed, briefly noted, common root. At the basis of the concrete, clear and distinct re-presentation (*Vorstellung*) of the world lies a doubleness, which gives the character of the product itself, its incompleteness and instability.

Therefore, we can reformulate the question: Is metaphysics not a habit, the outcomes of which are as natural as the expectation of repetition of the experience of the world lived through today and yesterday, and the time beyond that? If it is, we are also now asking out of habit and play out the drama of our failed metaphysical efforts out of an unconscious routine, relying on it to cease to be worried.

We stop by retraction or choice. One way or other our questioning ceases and we can now return to the safety of the core of experience, to 'ourselves' and 'the world': to living, intuiting, sensing the empirical reality of our passions, drives, interests and goals, with visions of satisfaction, comfort, and success. All of this is given, ready at hand, always available after the failure of the sporadic quests for truth. It is the place—the knowledge—to which we can return with ease. Here, there is something to cognise, intuit and experience, something to think; its concepts are not empty,

its intuitions—clear-sighted, not blind. Thus, if for Kant dogmatic metaphysics is an empty dialectic of illusion, the world of experience with its immediacy and concreteness is not. It remains our ground, our own turf, as it always was. Dogmatic metaphysics cannot provide that ground. It has no real content and can only mark the shifting contours of consciousness, pointing in this way to the fullness and power at the centre of cognition, experience and life itself. If this quest is a habit we can now safely give in: to the habit of the world of ‘things’ and perceptions, free of emptiness and abstractions. Here, there are no paralogsms, no antinomies; the given is present, concrete, objective; nature is the proper ground of reason.

To be sure, one cannot rely on this reading of the critique alone. The solution of Kant is complex and manifold in its intentions and results. Kant implements a turn in metaphysics, which effectively terminates its run as a pointless, dragged on experiment. He proves that we cannot rely on it and directs us to cognition based on experience as the only viable option. Science proper is explained and exposed in its legitimate borders defined by pure sensibility and the operations of reason upon objects made available by it. Science ought to develop in an infinite progress, but in morality experience is a constraint, a fallacy. There, we cannot return without a principle; we cannot rely on custom or accept the requirement of sensual intuition, the *need* of sensation. In morality, we have to depend on a pure principle and, in a certain sense, go against experience. The search for a moral principle does not suffer a reverse. The sought after is found. Is it not because the search is different?





# Moral Order

The Kantian paradox of man: to be enclosed between the sources of one's knowledge—receptivity (the givenness of the manifold of experience) and spontaneity (the activity of connecting and determining re-representations). And since the issue concerns the sources, at both ends there is openness, indeterminacy, or rather, indeterminability, which generates determinacy, products, i.e., experience.

To clarify we can perform a thought-experiment. If we approach the critique dogmatically, in a hypothetical metaphysical reading of Kant in the spirit of Spinoza, in both cases we would be speaking of openness to God. The nature of our knowledge, however, would have allowed us to be in relation only to aspects of the absolute. This means, that even if we accept the presence of such an absolute, it is precisely the limitation of experience that would show to thinking its own discursive character. On the one end, we would have access to 'intelligences' (subjects of experience), and on the other, access to 'things' (objects of experience); and it is easy to see that this very notion—objects of experience—is already a concealment and a formulation of impossibility and of incomprehension. Everything that one could say about the objective itself is derived from experience and is extraneous to it, so that the attempt to define objects immediately activates the formula of the 'thing in itself'.

This is underlined by the terminology of Kant. The object is given in 'intuition' (*Anschauung*), which carries in itself an element of activity, of action. Intuition is constituted in the act of seeing a showing (*Schauung*), i.e. in perception, consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Thus intuition

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1. The preferred English rendering of '*Anschauung*' is intuition. Later, in the texts of Schelling and Hegel '*intellektuelle Anschauung*' could be translated also as contemplation, but in Kant this cannot be done. Nevertheless, this later use of

remains an openness—‘experience relates in the end to intuitions’—and a relation to presence, to f/acts of sensibility. The senses sense; this is never suspended; receptivity and spontaneity generate a synthesis, which connects the indeterminate givenness of the thing in itself, the visible. Spontaneity is this very looking, the attempt to see, to understand and define the visible, which persists and remains there. Thus intuition is never fully determined, but always remains a determinable.

Experience is the act of determining intuition and of instituting a relation to it. This point is linked to Kant’s insistence on the impossibility of true knowledge by pure reason; intuition (*Anschauung*), ‘the visible’ (*das Schauende*) is what not only provides the occasion of cognition, but is constitutive of the object of spontaneity, of thinking. Synthesis is a movement, an act of comprehension or seeing, given by or with the ‘visible’ (receptivity). Hence, there is no option for completion and for the presentation of a separate, pure deduction of the content of cognition, since this content—the categories as functions of unity of representations, subjected to the principles of reason—are themselves connections to something else that remains constantly at the base as ‘other’, different, and so as an object of determination, ultimately, as indeterminable.

If a final determination or a complete grasp were possible, if the given were not also giving and our receptivity was receptivity in portions—in certain segments, quanta—consciousness would cease and die out. In a sense, consciousness is driven by the unconscious, that is, by intuition. Thinking is, partly, moved by sensibility as thinking of the intuited in a continuous, inseparable relation.<sup>2</sup>

Fichte shows this more clearly in relation to the self and the dialectics of the principles of the I and the non-I, the difference between

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the term shows that the concept of intuition is to be thought of in the context of activity.

2. Kant speaks of two sources, two activities and two directions of movement, and in one of them the given manifold is already present in consciousness ‘for appearances can certainly be given in intuition independently of functions of understanding . . . since intuition stands in no need whatsoever of the functions of thought’ (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 123). It is the one causing the need for connection and preservation of unity. The opposite movement is autonomous: reason is spontaneity, a capacity for connection and establishment of a systematic form. It is not possible to speak of predominance. The spontaneity of pure reason could be applied by itself; without the encounter with the given it meets no resistance, but achieves nothing.

which is defined as purely qualitative. The non-I is part of the movement of the I; it gives the very determination of the I and vice versa, and therefore, the real understanding of experience means understanding 'things in themselves' as constitutive. To be sure, this argument needs greater precision; speaking of things in themselves is misleading and is possible only in a transcendental perspective. This is a reference which works by analogy, as the reversed image of what we think we have as 'real' and what we believe we 'know': the things for us, represented, immediate. In themselves, the representations simply re-present and stand as our relations to this 'x'. We think this 'x' and therefore have synthesis, which is an attempt for the complete connection of the representations, the production of *one* representation, offering the complete attainment of the given. Instead, we have the given as intuition, as 'visible'; it stands in front of us and acts as a principle of connection, requiring further and further determination, demanding our constant perception, cognition, thinking. The result is the infinity of experience, and of receptivity, i.e., the infinity of spontaneity, and of reason itself.

On the other side is a givenness of a similar type, an openness, which acts in the opposite direction, from the pole of subjectivity, set in the double perspective of its theoretical and practical modes. The moral law gives the a priori form of a practical consciousness, i.e., of practical reason. Thus we have the form of syllogism; there is the universal, the necessity to bring the particular under it, in order to deduce the singular. We are beings under a moral law, beings under an obligation: to subject ourselves as singular to our universality as rational in the particularity of our actions; that is, to unite in ourselves the syllogism of practical action with the universality and apodicticity of freedom.

This is the second pole of indeterminacy, offering the appearance of the noumenon as obligation, or duty and as a form for the appearing and determined self-consciousness. Thus the concrete consciousness—open, intuitive, visible to itself, for itself—is in constant vigil over its appearance, given in a relation to an always determining but never determinable-by-itself type of consciousness, which constantly judges, requires, demands.

# 1.

Kant derives the formula of the moral law and the foundation of morality from the form of moral judgement and an analytic of moral

consciousness. The analytic deduces not so much the fact of the categorical imperative as the fact of the existence of a particular form and content of our moral judgements. The approach in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is a repetition of the one applied in the *Critique of Pure Reason* where the deduction of the categories and the analytic of the faculty of the understanding begins from the basic, given forms of judgement. They bear the moment of necessity, and in relation to it the formulation of the moral law as a categorical imperative is an actual determination of the type of judgement that corresponds to that title. Kant makes sufficiently clear the procedure through which he seeks to define the content of this imperative. Its content should follow the form and contain the requirement of universality of the moral judgement and the maxims of actions.

The apodictic requirement for the universality of the principles in accordance with which one acts stands at the foundation of the proper form of practical reason. We have a pure a priori determining ground (the universal) which acts in the formation of the principles of our moral causality and the world dependent on it as the world of practical action and thought. The maxims ought to be brought under the apodictic norm of universality, and it is this characteristic of a priori cognition that ought to be posited in the judgement determining the particular maxim of an action. What is required is the application of the a priori ground in practical consciousness and the introduction of lawfulness in the activity of defining our motives. The question is about a constitutiveness of a certain type. Moral experience is the only experience, which depends on ourselves, and is yet to be *given*. Here we alone give our representations and posit principles of creation of objects of moral experience (thoughts, actions, consequences) and of understanding the given in the manifold of experience (the actions of others).

For Kant, morality concerns the sphere of a special causality. It is a domain of a reality generated and regulated by the human being and by the human capacities for determination—reason and will. If for the sake of illustration one applies again some of the pre-Kantian metaphysical categories that he discarded, one would arrive at the following description. In the order of existence there are forms and determinations. The human being in its experience finds itself in relation to something—‘nature’, ‘world’—known and available in a certain way. Every human being has a certain perspective, certain contact (touch) and a (vague) sense of the entirety of this

givenness. Yet, this givenness of nature is unconditional; its comprehension depends solely on the human capacity for cognition.

In the world of practical action there is a completely different relation to actuality. Here we are aware of a different type of causality; we ourselves are causes, defining the grounds for a particular type of reality set by our actions. These actions are then brought to experience and become something 'given', 'objective'. The consciousness of a reality—the reality of an action—begins with us, starting with a desire and the notion of the possibility of its attainment. It continues with deliberation and implementation, the action's presence in actuality and final comprehension from the side of experience, given to ourselves by ourselves, now grasped in the frames of the 'world', where 'my action' has the character of an external determination set in the context of other causal relations.

Important for Kant are the question of duty and the need for a more refined understanding of the categorical imperative. Its content exceeds the characteristics of the moral law deduced in a purely logical way<sup>3</sup> since it brings the dimensions of apodicticity and universality within experience itself, imposing them in our consciousness as moral beings. Duty stands at the foundation of our capacity for reflective and constitutive judgements. Of the constitutive—because of the apodicticity, which provides immediate clarity on what *ought* to be the end of an action, even if the particular application is a matter of practical experience and individual consciousness. Of the reflective—because duty is also determined in a categorical manner, and it is our own thinking that imposes the weight of moral obligation.

In understanding the truth of our actions there is no arbitrariness or freedom of choice. The reflection itself—always as a self-reflection—adjudicates categorically the character of the action. Its grasping as real comes with the consciousness of its final internal valuation according to a principle.<sup>4</sup> This valuation is part of the consciousness of the deed, a constitutive element of the moral experience. In this there is no choice or free play of cognitive faculties;

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3. See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. M. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 5:27, 5:42.

4. Value or worth (*Würde*) comes from the concept of responsibility, that is, from freedom. The worth depends on us—on the input of rationality, universality and measure—and is recognised as such. See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 87–88, 98–99.

there is apodicticity and repetitiveness, and the powerful persistence of a specific type of awareness of the things done by us (conscience).<sup>5</sup>

Since the issue is about self-consciousness, there is always doubling of the processes, presence of a secondary reflection, and attempts for a re-make of that grasp as attempts for justification and relief. It all concerns us, our deeds, and therefore, it is we who have chosen to act in a particular way and taken responsibility for it. Nevertheless, this self-positing is judged by us again as different from the one envisaged at the beginning, causing the need for an anthropodicticity justifying the human being for its reality and its world.

2.

The impossibility to adjust the moral value of a deed is important because it bears the character of necessity. Moral consciousness is self-valuating; one holds oneself responsible—for something and before something. This value has the character of testimony and of measuring up to a principle. This is a pure a priori valuation, in which consciousness registers, measures and retains the result, without being able to change or deny it. The difference—the moral worth, the measure and the awareness for it, the desire for it to be better, different—is posited implicitly in the moral analytic of Kant.

Duty is constitutive. If one does not let it in the premise (the maxim) of causality, it appears apodictically in the result, brought back by the reflective ability, which not only registers the deed as encountered in experience (as occurrence) but measures it in relation to duty. Moral worth is already inscribed in the very fabric of experience, and forms part of the cognition of the deed as real, a fact in the sphere of actuality. Therefore, when one reflects upon one's actions, one judges their moral worth, and this moral worth alone is their essence, their truth. The problem, then, is the actuality and the causality of moral value. Its causality—already external and mechanical—is effective in an external world. It produces sequences of events in a particular order having a varying

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5. There is a transcendental reason for this. Pure reason does not need a scheme to determine the will. Autonomy is a direct and truthful determination of will, and our knowledge of this self-determination is completely authentic. 'Hence the moral law has no cognitive faculty other than the understanding (not the imagination) by means of which it can be applied to objects of nature, and what the understanding can put under an idea of reason is not a schema of sensibility but a law . . .' (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 69).

moral value. Freedom generates freedom; dependence breeds dependence. This responsibility for the causality dependent on us is a responsibility for the given, for the world, in which we act as final causes in relation to others, and fundamentally, to ourselves.

This is the principal moment for Kant: we are free, we are autonomous. Freedom in moral sense is something that we reach analytically and discover practically as real. Morality opens the sphere of practical reality of freedom but in absolute terms, it is conditional. We have freedom in the determining ground of our actions and consciousness for our own reality, and henceforth, responsibility for ourselves. In morality, for Kant, we are matter, form, active cause, and an end in ourselves but in its essence, our knowledge remains strictly within the framework of duty. So in a certain sense, duty inscribes the outlines within which our consciousness can unfold and sets limits for the forms of cognition and experience which we can have.

Practical action as a form of self-giving and objectifying ourselves manifests the elements of the internal dialectics which will later become central for Fichte. In Kant, the conception of practical reason holds true with the qualification that in this autonomous self-positing of reality one does not reach the final mechanisms of actuality. Practical action reveals only a segment of the reality and the chain of causality, of which, we, in theoretical respect, form part. Our reason can follow the presence of the moral law in the action and comprehend only the lawfully validated, given by means of the imperative. Thus, the moral aspect dominates consciousness and forms the content of reality itself.

Here two arguments are intertwined: the thesis about autonomy and the thesis about the things in themselves. The moral law serves as a ground for the consciousness of difference of metaphysical perception and defines the reality of the major distinctions, which we employ in order to create our notions of cause, action, identity, modality, externality, appearance, etc. The distinctions which we seek in the world are first found in ourselves.<sup>6</sup> The ideas of creation and

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6. Moral law and the concept of freedom lie at the foundation of the required totality of reason—in the antinomies, the proofs of the existence of God and the consequent concept of an ideal of pure reason. Kant writes: 'It is therefore the moral law, of which we become immediately conscious (as soon as we draw our maxims of the will for ourselves), that first offers itself to us and, inasmuch as reason presents it as a determining ground not to be outweighed by any sensible conditions and indeed quite independent of them, leads directly to the concept of



rationality, cause and effect, ideal-real are ideas that we have from the consciousness of ourselves as moral beings. We seek to reproduce this consciousness and bring it to bear on what we know as real in the world of experience, the given in intuition, the 'seen' (*Anschauung*). For it we seek a demiurge, a ground; we seek an ideal and a reason to design and maintain it in the dimensions of objectivity as an end, matter, form, and an active cause.<sup>7</sup>

In Kant, moral consciousness seeks to become theoretical, i.e., metaphysical. What has been cognised as immediate is perceived as a basis for a different experience of the world, grounding the totality of the world and our consciousness. For Kant, morality is an experience that seeks its ground, its author. We attempt to find it through the given, in the way we are conscious of ourselves and the world; we use our notions of knowledge and experience, adjusting it to our sense of rationality, causality and creation.

As said earlier, moral experience is limited; through it we relate and comprehend actuality as defined by the moral law. The ascribed moral values are truthful because they have the status of universality and apodicticity, and concern a sphere of givenness, for which we alone are responsible. Nevertheless, moral value is not a metaphysical category; it is a consciousness of duty, and of what is due in respect to a law of reason conceived by ourselves. We are aware of things in a particular manner; this manner defines how they are thought and given. Their form and content have a firmly assigned moral value, and this is what forms the content or the 'material' of ourselves.

What we know of ourselves and perceive as essential for our being is the consciousness of the decisions we took, the ideas we

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freedom'. Thus 'it is practical reason which first poses to speculative reason, with this concept, the most insoluble problem so as to put it in the greatest perplexity. . . one would never have ventured to introduce freedom into science had not the moral law, and with it practical reason, come in and force this concept upon us' (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 30).

7. 'Now I maintain that all attempts to employ reason in theology in any merely speculative manner are altogether fruitless and by their very nature null and void, and that the principles of its employment in the study of nature do not lead to any theology whatsoever. Consequently, the only theology of reason which is possible is that which is based upon moral laws or seeks guidance from them; and in order to have knowledge of a supreme being we should have to put them to a transcendental use, for which our understanding is no way fitted' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 665).

followed and the knowledge of their true meaning, i.e., their final moral worth. We know ourselves as what we determine ourselves to be. This is our only essential determination, our inner, intimate space, which we hide and protect; to it we react most strongly and carry it the way one carries a burden or an irrevocable weight as the weight of our own, moral worth.<sup>8</sup>

This point is related to the deeper, transcendental character of the moral law. It does not concern an external, public norm or content, adopted as a product of consensus or a general will; it is not something relative. Before it goes on the surface at a social level, this law must have its grounds in individual consciousness. The necessity with which it is brought to the public sphere as a norm imitates on the level of empirical, concrete consciousness the relation to a pure, a priori law, which manifests itself in relation to the will as a permanent obligation. For this reason, Kant reduces the external formulations of morality and presents only the analytical, pure formula of moral reasoning and moral judgement. Morality concerns reason's relation to itself. Everything that comes after that—as relations to others, intersubjectivity, society—takes place in the dimension of this relation to oneself; it is within the outlines of the consciousness of oneself as individuality, as a source and yet as a point of reference intertwined with others.

In this sense, it is important to observe how Kant unites the two theses of autonomy and noumenality. Moral consciousness envelops the noumenon—I, myself—and manifests itself in moral action. This manifestation is posited as authentic and is considered theoretically on the level of the analytic of practical reason. The presence of duty and the consciousness of the due—moral world, moral self—reveal the true nature of the I. We are appearances of

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8. 'It cannot be nothing less than what elevates a human being above himself (as part of the sensible world), what connects him with an order of things that only the understanding can think and at the same time has under it the whole sensible world and with it the empirically determinable existence of human beings in time and the whole of all ends (which is alone suitable to such unconditional practical laws as the moral). . . for it is then not to be wondered that a human being, as belonging to both worlds, must regard his own nature in reference to his second and highest vocation only with reverence, and its laws with highest respect' (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 87). This and not the simple consciousness of our own presence in the internal sense and the logical notion of spontaneity in the synthesis is what determines us as truly rational beings and as persons. See H. Stoev, Kant i problemyt za vytreshnoto setivo, Sofia: Iztok Zapad, 2005, 174–177.

ourselves; our moral actions are concrete actions in a world with aims, conditions and circumstances. We are aware of them; we ought to respond, so we act and we posit. Yet, this concrete consciousness of the world is subjected to a pure formula that reveals itself in its necessity only in relation to ourselves, in the form of our concreteness, our appearance. We are noumena in charge of their phenomenality, responsible for the way they are, and appear to themselves.<sup>9</sup>

3.

When Kant uses the expression 'in the framework of all possible experience' and speaks of experience as a finite sphere defined by principles, this often sounds like a limitation of the perspective of the human being, reduction of its freedom. Ecce homo, this is it, the human being; these are its principles, its possible experience, and nothing besides. Kant's claim to have exhausted these principles and to have presented all potencies of experience creates a special difficulty. Such a completion, even if deemed probable, seems is hard to accept; our egos are too strong, our ambitions too important for us; the restless quests of our mind breed endless varieties on the subject of 'metaphysics' as orders of representations of a higher kind, which we believe to be irreducible to the constraints of an already familiar pattern.

The claim for finality of the principles of experience is negative. Yet this act of preliminary disavowal of the human quest for truth has also another side, which has little to do with the didactical theses on the surface of *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* and much more with the inward logic of Kant's understanding of practical reason and the sense of ambiguity of the result of the first critique. This ambiguity was immediately noted

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9. 'Reason is the abiding condition of all those actions of the will under which man appears. Before ever they happened, they are one and all predetermined in the empirical character. In respect of the intelligible character, of which the empirical character is the sensible schema, there can be no before and after; every action, irrespective of its relation in time to other appearances, is the immediate effect of the intelligible character of pure reason. Reason therefore acts freely; it is not dynamically determined in the chain of natural causes through either outer or inner grounds antecedent in time' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 582). According to this intelligible character the human being has to consider itself as 'causa noumenon'. See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 49, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 569.

and triggered a debate about the true implications of transcendental philosophy, which started with Reinhold and Hamman and created a special, almost inevitable 'antinomy' in the understanding of Kant's moral philosophy.

As claimed earlier, for Kant morality is the private, narrower perspective of a properly outlined discipline—practical reason. Morality, in a certain sense, is a concept of derivation and application, in the foundation of which lies something else, namely, the concept of freedom. Freedom is understood here in its broadest possible sense as a pure concept and a transcendental category, which has its reality in experience and in relation to the will.<sup>10</sup> The way it is treated by Kant can be reduced to a sequence of equations between the concepts of reason, freedom and morality (reason = morality = freedom). We are rational beings, because we are free, and as far as we are free. Freedom makes us moral, and once again, morality makes us free in a reverse order.

In Kant, the main emphasis is on furthering a universal conception of the human being as practical and in defining an infinite horizon—inside and outside the human being. 'Practical is everything that is possible through freedom'.<sup>11</sup> In an inner plain, this means that freedom is the primary practical, moral and theoretical concept 'in the strictest, that is, transcendental sense'.<sup>12</sup> The measure of all things, the measure of man: this universal measure is set inwardly, in the intimacy of consciousness as self-consciousness. Unfreedom is the impossibility to be moral and rational, and act in accordance with the measure of the infinity inside us, the measure of universality.

Seen in this light, the ease with which Kant speaks of the opportunity to define all possible experience acquires a different meaning. As said earlier, practical experience gives knowledge of ourselves and of our own manifestations. The perception of the external reality of our choices and actions constitutes the fabric of the world and what we think we 'really are'. This experience of ourselves creates the idea of our being parts of a determined and verified reality. This is experience of freedom and self-determination, knowledge of the appearance of ourselves and of what we are in the dimensions of phenomenality.

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10. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 70.

11. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 828.

12. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 29.

At the same time, the properties of experience presented in the *Critique of Practical Reason* reveal it as wide open. With regards to its sources, experience remains an enigma and a special type of reaction and relation to an initially *given*, which remains indeterminate and unknown, and is yet enclosed in the perspective of repetitiveness of its representations. The conditions of sensibility of the understanding designate a specific framework and a manner of transformation of the given into a content, which from then on is maintained in relation to the understanding. The given remains an *x*, and despite that, in our reference to it in the subsequent determinations of experience, there is hardening of the structure of representations and increasing reliance on the processed syntheses of experience. The reference loses the element of initial openness and the sense of possibility and purity of the determination disappears in the subjection of the manifold of experience and its transmutation to content. The content displaces the object and becomes, for us, the object itself.

In the framework of experience, our first conscious encounters with the reality of self-determination provide the content of the concept of practical rationality. Using this sense of exposure, reason creates the integral notions of our practical and moral causality, and defines the possibilities of the self. Experience shows what we are capable of and defines our approach to situations of freedom and choice. In it, there is no space for spontaneity; over time it is allowed to express only in the secured corridors of successful past actions, achieved aims, and completed circles—from the definition of the aim, to action, and the reality of the representation posited in it.

From a certain point onward, the *I*, which as the transcendental apperception I think ‘must accompany all my representations’ makes this experience of itself into an actual self-determination and functions as a kind of a ‘practical apperception “I wish”’. Certain types of willing are deemed ‘possible’ and thought to bring success, delineating a sphere of freedom and accomplishment; certain other types of willing are deemed ‘impossible’ and thought to bring failure. And so within the strict mechanics of experience, reality assumes the character of givenness, defining the possible paths of freedom and the acceptable contents of its concept. Freedom is what is possible in experience, prescribed by the tracks of the past—freedom to reassert the given and revert to the tried maxims and ends in ever changing situations of choice.

This is the source of the decisiveness with which Kant draws the border between the intelligible and the sensible world—between autonomy and heteronomy—and identifies the moral law as a formal, not a material principle of determination. His moral conception comes as a result of the *Critique of Pure Reason* which makes irrelevant all theoretical constructs challenging the foundation of the pure a priori ground of duty. Theoretically, it cannot be ‘turned into knowledge’, but practically it can be followed, posited and lived. Because the human being is not simply nature, it is freedom.<sup>13</sup>

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13. ‘[I]n the explanations of events in the real world and so too of the actions of rational beings, I grant the mechanisms of natural necessity the justice of going back from the conditioned to the conditioned ad infinitum, while on the other side I keep open for speculative reason the place which for it is vacant, namely the intelligible, in order to transfer the unconditioned into it’ (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 49).



# FICHTE

I have nothing in common with those who, as a result of protracted spiritual servitude, have lost their own selves and, along with that, any feeling for their own conviction.

*An Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1798), 422.





# Foundation

The starting point of Fichte is the concept of science and the conviction that science has to be redesigned and rethought. The process of this rethinking begins in Kant but becomes a central problem for Fichte with the questions about the foundation: What should constitute a science? On what basis should it be founded? What kind of knowledge must support its set of principles so that other types of scientific disciplines could be constructed accordingly? So the focus turns; the task is to provide the grounding (*Grundlegung*) of sciences, which is to take place not in a descriptive but in a normative plane.<sup>1</sup> This new type of scientific knowledge has yet to be constructed. The elements are present, and so is the space for its construction in the logically and transcendently cleared ground of reason.

For Fichte, this becomes possible through the work of the transcendental critique. So far, science has grown without such a basis. It was semi-elucidated in Aristotle, but after that the consciousness of the internal connection and unity of knowledge with all the different conditions of possibility of its divisions was lost, resurfacing as a problem again only in Descartes and Leibnitz. The progress of mathematics, in this sense, was made possible by the abstract nature of its elements and the always available transcendental opportunity for its advance. In the field of physics and the other sciences, knowledge grew empirically out of confronting objectivity, not of the consciousness of an absolutely certain basis of knowledge which in itself would define the development of all possible disciplines.

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1. In the words of Hegel 'Fichte does not proceed descriptively (erzählend)'. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Band 18, Frankfurt am Main: Felix Mainer, 1979, 392.

Therefore, the Fichtean questions concern the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge and any particular field of cognition defined in accordance with principles. At stake are precisely these principles and the ground that makes possible the constitution of the concept of science in general. Viewed in this way, previous sciences appear as developed under unclear internal conditions. Clarifying these terms shows science as a manifestation of consciousness and a subject of transcendental analysis whose ultimate ground must be found. This is the programme of Fichte.

This task was first realized in Kant; the right questions were put forward, but they were not followed to the end. The basis—the ground—was presented as indeterminable, and left unexplained. For Fichte, the conceptual form of science and knowledge in general requires a deeper look, even if it means going beyond Kant, and breaking with him, because this is the only way to respond to the questions raised in the critique. The logical structure and unity of scientific knowledge, and so the very possibility of knowledge of objects according to principles, cannot remain without justification, and a basis in transcendental consciousness. This consciousness has its own characteristics, which differ from what is revealed retrospectively in Kant's critical deduction of the conditions of experience. It is indeed a way this structure to be exhibited, and to arrive, following in the footsteps of transcendental analytic, to the necessary conditions of the functioning of that basis. Yet, for Fichte, Kant's conception of transcendental consciousness is still the outcome of a reversed questioning and a deduction of the ground from the result—the product, experience. There it has its role in unity with other factors of determination, and is perceived as a schema or a function defined by what it conditions.

Relying on Kant, Fichte embarks on a thorough reinvestigation of the idea of the transcendental apperception 'I think' and its place in the body of human knowledge. The end is to provide an autonomous clarification of the apperception as it appears in the light of the transcendental logic. For Fichte, the transcendental apperception of Kant appears more as identified and named, rather than fully elucidated and has be considered not only as a condition of possibility of the unity of representations and the working of the understanding, but as a condition of possibility of rational knowledge in general, to which belong philosophy and the transcendental critique.

Fichte's guiding insight is that the type of knowledge that seeks truth and demands principles before coming to know them has to have a deeper, stronger foundation. There must be some knowledge at its centre, a primary 'one' of cognition, setting criteria for certainty, validity and truth. What is concrete and found present in the empirical synthesis must be grasped in a definite, rigorous way. And this grasp—this grip, *Begriff*, *greiffen*—must have a basis, something to provide the hardness of the grip itself and the solidity of the determination. There must be a more powerful centre point, a stronger form of unity of consciousness to give definiteness to every particular synthesis in the vast and continuous flow of perceptions, representations and reflections.

Fichte is, of course, quite careful in the determination of this 'one' precisely because the process of its determination should not be rushed or impulsive. For him, it must, first, be Kantian, which means, be valid within the transcendental structure of consciousness as revealed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>2</sup> And, simultaneously, it must perform a task, which is not fully accomplished there by explaining the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge and of the critique itself.<sup>3</sup>

So next to the Kantian question 'How are a priori scientific judgements possible?' Fichte adds his own: How is the search for such judgements possible? What is the base for the demand for them

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2. 'A being exists only for the I the philosopher is observing, for this observed I thinks in a realistic manner. What exists for the philosopher' (the observing I) 'acting, and acting is all that exists for him'. (J. G. Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, trans. D. Breazeale, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1994, 252/500). Hereafter cited as *An Attempt at a New Presentation*. See G. Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy. The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

3. The close following of Kant in *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* moves to the need to defend the consistency of his position and the link of the science of knowledge to the critical system. In *An Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* there is the tension of the attempt of identification ('We definitely encounter Kant with precisely the same concept of pure I that is presented in the Wissenschaftslehre' [229/477]), the acknowledgement of the need for further development ('Nowhere did he discuss the foundation of the entire philosophy' [225/472]) and the almost direct clash in the understanding of the conditions of sensibility ('Until such time as Kant himself explicitly declares, in so many words, that he derives sensation from an impression produced by the thing itself. . . I will continue to refuse to believe what these interpreters tell us about Kant' [239/486]). Kant, of course, did that.

and the sources of the questioning of the form of our knowledge in such a way? What is thematised here is the difference between the conditioned—the purely rational cognition according to principles, including the very criticism of the transcendental mode—and the condition, the source of justification, the ground. However, it also raises the question of the unconditional of the search, the source of the demand for such knowledge and the sense of difference within knowledge itself related to the consciousness of division between empirical, reflective knowledge, and rational, pure cognition. This is an issue of purity and the qualitative difference in the types of thinking in general.<sup>4</sup>

In this respect, Fichte does not go far beyond Kant. The notion of ‘transcendental apperception I think that must accompany all my representations’ remains valid for him. The I is not elucidated as substance; elucidated is its determination in relation to this accompanying function of unity as the transcendental basis of thinking once again in the perspective of conditions of possibility.

The dialectical structure of thinking—I, not-I, their identity—sets the dynamics of synthesis which occurs there. The act of synthesis of the representations, which Kant explains in such detail, has its grounds in another act, whose continuation is the concrete perception. The act of grasping and of retention of intuition is accomplished under the constitutive conditions of the dialectic of the I and of thinking as positing and self-positing. Returning to the figure of unity, Fichte shows that the unity of consciousness of the critique is a result of an inner, ground-laying activity, determined by a ‘one’, which can withstand differentiation, opposition and negation of itself, i.e., the non-I.

It is here, in the quest for a more definite understanding of the necessary conditions of possibility of the unity of knowledge, that Fichte changes the setting of Kant and moves the centre of gravity of the whole system, balanced in the equal distance between concept and intuition. Revealing the conditions of possibility of the first, unifying pole, weakens the second. The nature of the I and the dynamics of acting observed there draws all attention. It is impossible to contain the fascination with what is revealed in this primary level of consciousness and return to the evenness of the ‘optimistic agnosticism’ of Kant with its interest in the materiality of

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4. Note the language of purity—truth is the absolute probe of cognition, without admixture, without illusions.

experience. The focus indivertibly shifts from the perception to that which sustains it, to the self.

From then on, Fichte has the task to contain himself, because in turning the I into an object, he plunges into the entire content of consciousness with everything that it possesses and presents as contents and opportunities. The experience of the I, of his own acting consciousness, becomes a background space that embraces the purely logical, transcendental approach that he tries to exemplify in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Thus the problem is not so much with the introduction (the entry) to the science of knowing as with the conclusion (the exit) from it. It is about the elucidation of the nature of the living individual consciousness from the side of the a priori base of unconditional self-consciousness—a task that Fichte does not fully come to accomplish. Nevertheless, the formulation of the end is made abundantly clear—the I should clarify itself, unfold the difference that structures it, and in this manner, come to the realisation of its own levels of self-determination.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* defines the possibility and the boundaries of this new discipline of givenness—the science of the self and its own self-elucidation. According to the transcendental position of Fichte, it does not need anything else for it to be conducted, except the power to sustain this perspective and keep the inquiry within the frames of transcendental-logical cognition. Yet, this necessitates a radical approach, where reason alone can place limits for itself and its transits within the infinitely complex and fluid material of consciousness. The task is set and has to wait for its accomplishment later.

The purpose of Fichte's work and the promise before his project of a science of this kind is the idea of freedom as the practical dimension of the unconditionality of the transcendental apperception 'I think'. The thesis of the reality of freedom as a result of the critique is proclaimed first by Kant; for Fichte the inquiry into the nature of the I leads to the immediate insight into absolute acting and self-positing. The I depends only on itself, its self-determination—on the consciousness it has and accepts for itself.

# 1.

The difference between the activity of the foundation (the absolute, unconditional I) and the activity of the conditioned (the posited in opposition, the divisible and the divided I) becomes central for

Fichte. In both cases at stake is subjectivity, although with the second we have a conditioned understanding of action, and an assumption of limitations in the positioning of the I. Fichte presents things schematically; this necessarily happens in the earlier works—the *Grundlegung der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, etc.—but the reason for that has a deeper meaning. The change in understanding the unconditionality of thinking, the I and the structure within which this ‘I’ is itself—the action of returning to itself (‘I and self-reverting acting are completely identical concepts’)<sup>5</sup>—leads to a new sense of the concept of freedom.<sup>35</sup> Freedom is a part of the concept of subjectivity and unconditionality. The unconditional is a subject, thinking spirit (later, in Hegel, absolute spirit). Therefore, subjectivity, defined as concrete in thinking, is conscious of itself as subjected, conditioned, and posited by itself.

Every practical action is oriented in relation to a new centre and receives its measurement in a different coordinate system, at the intersection of which stands the unconditionality of the I and of thinking. So for Fichte the problem of practical action becomes a problem of acceptance and of conditioning. The concrete, ‘natural’ self-consciousness is unconscious of itself and relates to materiality, to things. The sense of a world and an all-concealing horizon of givenness and objectivity as a whole—this is what is allowed to determine the intention and meaning of action in an almost mechanical mode. Experience throws a projection over the act, and it is conceived of as having to co-respond and con-form, be ‘realistic’, i.e., adequate to the projection of reality. Morality and freedom are understood as arts of the possible; a ‘possible’ of always clearly defined limits, prescribing doses of liberty, tolerable levels of autonomy. This is freedom as conformity and compliance, which the subject should willingly accept.

In Fichte the discovered inner meaning of the transcendental apperception ‘I think’ as the ‘accompanying’ moment of unity of all representations elucidates also the meaning of this inherent self-limitation of consciousness. The duality of consciousness of the I, the awareness of myself as a subject, defines also the duality of the understanding of practical action and its perceived possible reality. The laying of the foundation—the *Wissenschaftslehre* as the ground of the practical reason and the sciences of the spirit, of what is ‘possible

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5. Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*, 216/462.

through freedom' (ethics, law)<sup>6</sup>—throws light on the constitution of the meaning of action itself. It is a positing of reality, an acceptance and projection of actuality, doing.<sup>7</sup>

The I acts; it posits itself continually in acts of understanding and doing, setting up ends and realising them in a kind of extension (excursion) of consciousness. These extensions of the I are extensions of cognition. Within the frames of situated subjectivity—limited, thought of in and through representations—action creates a sphere of reality, which is the reality of the representations themselves, but also, of the I as actualisation of the possibility of unfolding the active principle in it.

This actualisation (appearance) of the I is the foundation of consciousness, the core of experience since the I is construed in experience and is conscious of itself in it. Experience of the I, in the I, for the I is the I taken as content and as phenomenon, but also, as reality, practical action and knowledge of itself. The unfolding of the I brings forth the ethical dimension. Most of the actions of the I affect its relations with others. Thus, moral consciousness is subject to the same universal conditions of consciousness that apply elsewhere—the opposition I-not-I and the dimensions of duality of the reality-perception. The I builds awareness of itself as a moral subject, and as part of a relation between subjects in general. The consciousness of oneself and others forms one common notion of the reality of the human being encompassing the others and the self. This is the field of ethics, limited by the dimensions of the acquired, actual knowledge of our inner self, that is, by our moral experience.

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6. Kant's definition of the practical: 'everything that is possible through freedom'.

7. In the words of one of the Fichtean fragments of Novalis 'activity is the only reality'. Novalis, *Werke in vier Teilen*, Hrsg. H. Friedmann, Berlin: Bong & Co, 1920, Teil 4, fragment 190.





# Freedom

The discovery of Fichte: we are only consciousness, only that—activity, thinking, self-consciousness. The I is a name of something else, not even a pole or determination of givenness. Experience is a level of consciousness, out of which—only out of which—grows objectivity grasped in the context of empirical intuition (*Anschauung*). Consciousness over consciousness over consciousness. The awareness of something becomes objectivity and a layer of givenness for another type of consciousness, which in turn acts as a layer of givenness for another. The principal point is the idea of absolute primacy of consciousness, and, hence, of ourselves as ‘acting returning to itself’, i.e., as thinking. The result is a radical transformation; objectivity becomes something posited in the dimensions of another layer of consciousness sustaining its presence—the static posited by action—while subjectivity receives a new sense of freedom as freedom from givenness and the notion of objectivity as a limitation.

To conceive of ourselves as given is to take ourselves as products, as materialised images of acting. The acceptance of reality as objectification is acceptance of an image, need for the representation (*Vorstellung*) and for what it presents.<sup>1</sup> It is fixation on the secondary, an agreement with it. For Fichte, this is an issue that defines our conception of the self—the acceptance of ourselves as projections, taking the perception for the ground. What is actual is active; it is the activity and the posited in it. So this ‘acting returning to itself’

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1. “The final goal of their acting is their own I (in the sense in which they understand this word, i.e., their own individual person), which thus also constitutes the limit of their ability to think clearly. For them, their own individual I is the only true substance, and reason is merely an accident of this substance” (Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*, 258/505).

is, first, a definition of the primary 'secret acting' of consciousness; and, second, its completion, which in the earlier expositions of the science of knowledge is exhibited in the division of three abstract phases. This return—made conscious—becomes discovery of the truth of objectivity and the I, the discovery of ourselves.

The discovery of the self as consciousness and as a subject that stands in a structure of relation to itself is a movement towards completeness, towards truth. This is the other aspect of the transcendental reality of freedom presented by Fichte as foundation of the practical reality of reason. This return to itself as return to consciousness provides the dimension of the possibility of the self and the reality of the I in a world. 'The represented', 'the presentable' within us: this knowledge of our connectedness of things, this intertwined objectivity in posited difference within identity (*Identität*) supersedes the determination of reality as restriction. Later, Hegel makes this into a central point of difference with Fichte speaking of his proximity to Kant, to Sollen, but in reality there is much more in Fichte than Hegel admits.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of freedom and the consciousness of ourselves as acting (*Tätigkeit*) in what Fichte calls 'intellectual intuition' (*intellektuelle Anschauung*)<sup>3</sup> provides a new foundation of thinking, which concerns practical action. Intellectual intuition exhibits the dynamic and dialectical nature of the concrete self, posited in duality and difference. With its actions in relation to objects and among objects, it is determined and objectified as a person, as an individual.

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2. The general view of Hegel in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* is that 'the philosophy of Fichte knows only the finite, not the infinite spirit; it does not know it as universal thinking'. (Hegel, *Vorlesungen der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 409).

3. Defined as the required of the philosopher 'act of intuiting himself while simultaneously performing the act by means of which the I originates from him', intellectual intuition 'is the immediate consciousness that I act and of what I do when I act. It is because of this that it is possible for me to know something because I do it. That we possess such a power of intellectual intuition is not something that can be demonstrated by means of concepts, nor can an understanding of what intellectual intuition is be produced from concepts' (Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*, 217/463). This is, of course, the same often referred to but never allowed for human cognition intellectual intuition of Kant. Fichte, however, shows that in the act of pure thinking of oneself occurs precisely this: the concept becomes reality, and the subject is turned into an object. In it, I think of myself, I want to define myself, and I already do this; what is thought of is determined in action and become precisely what I have determined. The I is simultaneously intuition for itself and concept of itself. This, however, is valid for nothing else.

For Fichte, intellectual intuition does not remove this determination; it thinks it and so it becomes something we are conscious of as a projection, as a point of exit and a point of return. Every action is self-projection or self-positing within the confines of determinateness and difference, i.e., within the dimensions of experience. Intellectual intuition does not cancel experience; thinking does not sublate empirical consciousness. Once achieved, this awareness of freedom awakes the will to become, in the words of Novalis, 'the I of our own I', the foundation of our self.<sup>4</sup> Personality, our presence in a world, and empirical intuition all remain. The initiated return to itself goes through, and it is expressed in the freedom to be determined, finite, and thus, universal.

The dialectics manifests the proportions of human personality and the idea of the self, hence the idea of infinity and the endless path for the human being. Fichte introduces the measure of rationality, the unconditional, which removes the self-evident givenness of the human being, and the acceptance of the human being as a fact, as a habit: the human being as experience, as history. The self, conditioned and posited in relation to objectivity cannot be perceived except as a beginning, a member of a chain of determinations and self-determinations that originates in and points to infinity, i.e., to rationality and universality. Measure for measure, freedom.

The pathos which so clearly moves Fichte is the pathos of the discovery of freedom, the finding of the true measure of the human being as true measure of consciousness—infinity, opposed to what one is now, what one thinks one is and could be.<sup>5</sup> The science of knowing gives the outlines of a new 'ought' (*Sollen*), and a new foundation, which alone can be worthy of the human being and its true nature—universality as identity of personality and reason.

However, in placing this measure for the individual—because intellectual intuition is not self-dependent we are not only intellectual intuition but also thinking beings given in action, in return, and hence in extension of ourselves—universality becomes a task and a challenge for the determinateness of the human being conscious

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4. Novalis, *Werke in vier Teilen*, fragment 166.

5. Its true determination (*Bestimmung des Menschen*), and, in a sense, its concept is freedom. This determination is self-determination; unlike objects, we define ourselves. Thus the calling of man is acting.

of itself as reality.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the centre of gravity and of expectation moves. The promise of man, one's vocation is not contained in objectivity or givenness. It is not in the fixed determinations or the positions of security that one seeks in experience: one's particular *Lebenswelt*, our own base in perception. Our completeness is on this side of what gives experience and empirical truth. It is on the side of consciousness, of knowledge, which is the only thing that we, in the end, want for ourselves. This is what draws us to the lower forms of experience and the intensity of perception provided by material things and desire giving us the reality of the representations of ourselves, of our sense of presence and being.

For Fichte, the only thing that can give such knowledge—true knowledge of ourselves—is thinking and intellectual intuition. Its acting alone can liberate us and satisfy the drive of the I-hood to finitude, being, and volition. This experience of ourselves is freedom, universality; it is real infinity for ourselves and the source of our positing as finite and concrete, as individuals.

All the Idea of the I has in common with I as intuition is this: in neither case is the I considered to be an individual. . . . Philosophy in its entirety proceeds from the former [the I as intuition], which is thus its basic concept. From this, it proceeds to the latter, to the I as an Idea which can be exhibited only within practical part of philosophy, where it is shown to be the ultimate aim of reason's striving. As we have said, the former is an original intuition, which becomes concept. . . . The latter is nothing but an Idea. It cannot be thought of in any determinate manner, and it will never become anything real; instead, it is only something to which we ought to draw infinitely nearer.<sup>7</sup>

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6. 'Like sensory intuition, which never occurs by itself or constitutes a complete state of consciousness this intellectual intuition never occurs alone, however, as a complete act of consciousness. Both types of intuition must also be grasped by means of concepts, or 'comprehended'. Nor is this all. In addition, intellectual intuition is always conjoined with some sensory intuition. I cannot discover myself to be acting without also discovering some object upon which I act; and I discover this object by means of sensory intuition, which I grasp by means of a concept. Moreover, I cannot discover myself to be acting unless I had immediately observed myself engaged in the act of constructing an image or a picture of what it is I want to produce... I become conscious only of the concepts involved, that is, the concept of the object and the concept of the goal, not however of the two intuitions that lie at the basis of these concepts'. Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*, 218/464.

7. Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*, 266/516.

The human being as transcendence of its determination, as rationality and infinity. The introductory statements of the early expositions on the *Wissenschaftslehre* are dominated by criticism: of dogmatism, of objectivity, of what is experienced and done. However, this infinity, this return to itself as a return to freedom, is the promise of the human being, and to the human being. As a principle it contains a parallel to the French Revolution and the epoch that took individuals out of the anonymity of their professional life and rushed them into the stage of reality and freedom.<sup>8</sup> Everyone who came to the true knowledge of oneself was free to become part of reason and of humanity as an idea.

Equality, brotherhood, freedom... Later, when the very mentioning of the name of Robespierre would become uncomfortable, this would be passed over in silence,<sup>9</sup> but it was clear to all that in its pure principles the science of knowing and the entire philosophy

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8. Robespierre, Danton and the others would have remained in the small circle of their professional life if the epoch had not awakened and called them. The declaration of the rights of man, the new constitution, the festival of reason—all this has a personal, existential meaning. These rights and the consciousness of them have made these people what they are—citizens, free and proud with the knowledge of the power of freedom in their life.

9. Hegel makes a direct connection Rousseau–French Revolution–Fichte but in a passage which because of its insincerity I quote in full: ‘The merit of Rousseau’s contribution to the search for this concept is that, by adducing the will as the principle of the state, he is adducing a principle which has thought both for its form and its content, a principle indeed which is thinking itself, not a principle, like gregarious instinct, for instance, or divine authority, which has thought as its form only. Unfortunately, however, as Fichte did later, he takes only the will in a determinate form as the individual will, and he regards the universal will not as the absolutely rational element in the will, but only as a ‘general’ will which proceeds out of this individual as out of conscious will. The result is that he reduces the union of individuals in the state to a contract and therefore to something based on their arbitrary wills, their opinion, and their capriciously given express consent; and abstract reasoning proceeds to draw the logical inferences which destroy the absolutely divine principle of the state, together with its majesty and absolute authority. For this reason, when these abstract conclusions came into power, they afforded for the first time in human history the prodigious spectacle of the overthrow of the constitution of a great actual state and its complete reconstruction ab nihilo on the basis of pure thought alone, after the destruction of all existing and given material. The will of its re-founders was to give it what they alleged was a purely rational basis, but it was only abstractions that were being used; the idea was lacking; and the experiment ended in the maximum of frightfulness and terror’ (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, London: Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, § 258, Addition.)

of idealism was a science of freedom, a passionate study of the idea of the possible reality of the human being and its struggle to reach its promise.

The strive to reach the promise of oneself sets the principles of the objective, practical freedom as a new world and 'the magnificent sunrise' of a new era.<sup>10</sup> Nothing of the mechanisms of objectivity of late XVIII century Europe as a historical, political givenness could withstand the principles of awakened rationality and universality set as an internal measure, and an end in itself. One new spirit gives a new personality and a new reality to itself, positing rights for everyone everywhere for all time. In one place, one group of people establishes a new rational reality of the idea that has to become accessible for all and demonstrate itself triumphantly in everything—laws, political system, science, art and the theatre of war.

Nothing illustrates the infinite power of the Fichtean formula of freedom—the human being as thinking and acting which needs to wake up—as the story of the French Revolution with the momentum of its achievements and convolutions. There the pure principles, of which Fichte wrote about later were defined as actual rationality and embodied in institutions, laws and ethical values. They were proclaimed and acted upon and that very action had as its aim the endless principle of striving and the measure given to reality and history, the measure of universality.

For Fichte, individuality has to enact this principle and materialise it in history, giving it the degree of objectivity encountered in the impetus of sensible intuition. This hardening of the dimensions of posited objectivity should actualise the idea in the given self, manifesting the dynamics of universality in the finite, and the dialectics of personality in freedom.<sup>11</sup>

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10. The metaphor used by Hegel in *Philosophy of Right* sums up the reception of the French Revolution as a different, political turn, which leads to a revolution in science and philosophy, in agreement with Kant's thesis for the dominance of the practical over the theoretical.

11. 'Reason is the end and personality is the means; personality is merely a particular expression of reason, one that must increasingly be absorbed into the universal form of reason. For the *Wissenschaftslehre*, reason alone is eternal; whereas individuality must ceaselessly die out. Anyone who will not first accommodate his will to this order of things will never obtain a true understanding of the *Wissenschaftslehre*' (Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*, 505/258).

## 1.

The flight is followed by descent. Dialectics—difference enclosed in identity—bears negation (Anstoß, struggle, endless push) and the determination of the I between two intuitions: the inner, of itself, and the external, of an objectivity. Receptivity cannot be deferred or denied. It remains constantly along the determinations of the human being with its physicality, sensibility and architectonic of consciousness. Receptivity is perceived as pressure; it defines a boundary for the I and cognition. The borderline, always shifting, runs through the centre of the human being which ‘feels’ and ‘experiences’ emotions, desires, impulses, pain.<sup>12</sup> This is the receptivity of the human being as nature and givenness, offering itself as perception and intuition. It shows the I as self-feeling, as felt, intuited and received in the inner sense by the I as freedom, as intellectual intuition, as reason.

Thinking, thinkable—sensation, sensible. The Fichtean understanding of the I stresses the presence of both and their full simultaneous givenness: the givenness of pain and desire of the living, and, the givenness of the conceived, of reason and the I that accepts (witnesses) itself in sensation. On one side is the reality of the act of consciousness and of what we are conscious of, where consciousness itself is a condition of sensation. On the other side is the sensation as something that imposes itself in an uncompromising manner, as an ‘other’—as irritation, appearance, intuition. The duality of Kant’s criticism is fully preserved here, sharpened and, perhaps, dramatised by Fichte, in his effort to go in the dimensions of consciousness as dimensions of thinking and intellectual intuition.

And here lies a paradox which was to become one of the sources of Hegel’s dissatisfaction with Fichte’s conception of the unconditional with its alleged incompleteness, lack of transcendence of the duality (*Verzweigung*) of consciousness, and ‘timidity’ in the attempt to go beyond Kant. Hegel’s charges are well known: the Fichtean system is united not in thinking but in faith, considered as un-thought and as a barrier; the whole is achieved by projection and by exhausting the quest in an act of self-limitation of reason.<sup>13</sup>

12. ‘I find myself at the crossroads of two worlds . . .’ (Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, trans. P. Preuss, Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, 115).

13. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 409.



There is real tension in this—in the expounded logical power of the principle of the I and the definition of its unconditional nature as the central thesis of idealism. In the consciousness of dialectical self-limitation, the awareness of a different kind of givenness, which appears to be set along this field of clarity and deduced in transcendental perspective, the *Wissenschaftslehre* reaches its own boundary and presents itself as accepting a limit, despite the magnitude of its findings in the dimensions of thinking. This is realism as an instinct of reason or a restraint and an epoche, which Hegel will later ignore.

In Fichte, this instinct is preserved in the thesis of the moral order and the true dimensions of freedom perceived as an inner, unconditional freedom of consciousness, which, at the same time, for all its clarity, does not translate into absolute action. The strength of the unconditional is in converting the incoming opposite movement and the assumption of the counter-push of sensible intuition. So unconditionality is connected with a more refined version of Kant's argument of the moral law and of duty as the duty to be, to act and think, under the conditions to which we are subjected as sensible, feeling and thinking beings.

The unconditionality of the self is unconditionality of the internal rational ground for acting—the good. It does not depend on sensible intuition; as concrete, it is determined by principles and those principles come from the internal self-positing of the I. The good, said in the popular style of the *Vocation of Man*, is a matter of an internal act of thinking and our knowledge of it. This act should be imposed; it should be given. Something opposes it, but it is inconcrete, undefined. What resists it is the dimension of objectivity adopted by consciousness with its notions of itself, 'the others' and 'the world'. At its base, the other is sensible intuition, feeling and representation (*Vorstellung*) about rational beings having the same grounds for action as ourselves. Thus the unconditionality of duty comes from the consciousness of duality of our determinateness as 'spontaneous receptivity'. This duality is unconditional, as is duty in relation to it. Our consciousness of receptivity, of subjection, is simultaneous with the consciousness of a necessary action coming purely from ourselves.

For Fichte, duty is the consciousness of imposition of ourselves as we are—spontaneously receptive, feeling, desiring, willing. It is the actuation of the whole according to a pure principle and an

internal obligation to transcend the notions derived from empirical intuition and receptivity. Duty is the transcendence of the I as receptivity, and in a certain way, as experience. It is transcendence of ourselves, because we are only the consciousness that we have for ourselves.

The argument for infinity of acting—the infinity of the task and of rationality—is determined in relation to this endless *giving* of receptivity, which individualises and seals off the posited I, determining it in a different way, from below. This movement can not be stopped; it can only be mastered and controlled and this is culture (*Bildung*).<sup>14</sup> Rationality should be imposed; its determinations as actions from freedom must be able to resist the sensible, to supersede it and thus take hold of it.

This is moral order or an arrangement, as one arranges a garden and cultivates a natural possession. For self-consciousness, it means making ourselves parts of this order and acting as centres of universality, determining in action the reality of freedom in the fullness of life of society. The I is revealed as a universalising force; the internal action—as order and predetermination of harmony; and a kind of theodicy by means of consciousness and personal choice. This is will for order, will for freedom, and will for over-, meta-sensibility; striving after a meaning of the sensed and its saturation with understanding. In short—a will for rationality.

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14. Cf. I. S. Stefanov, *Dialektikata na Fichte*, Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1982.



# SCHELLING

All limitation emerges only through the act of self-consciousness.

*System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), III, 409.



# Identity

When one reads Schelling or the scattered like precious stones philosophical fragments of Novalis one can notice many of the focal points of the future Hegelian philosophy—ethical, logical, historical, aesthetic, etc. Schelling presents a system as the total embrace of a formula, thought and re-thought in its reaching into infinity dimensions, and followed through to the depths of the given. This is an impossible point of view of consciousness, an openness to the interior of things, in which every possible point, looked in whichever direction, reveals itself as the specific formula of being of a subject-object imbued with qualities, which are themselves manifestations of that formula. This openness leads to unsustainability of the ordinary and even of the heightened philosophical consciousness, because in it the world itself is made transparent, open and infinite. Everything given in the common, direct perspective of consciousness is inter-connected and determined in a completely different mode, so that in manifesting its inner essence, it manifests the world itself, the universe. The inner is revealed as the formula of the outer, and as a figure which in presenting itself as a determination, a being, delineates the external.<sup>1</sup>

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1. 'Everything that is is the absolute identity itself'. From this follows that absolute identity 'inasmuch as it is only under one form, in the singular in the same form, under which it is in the whole, and insofar as also in the whole under no other, but under that which is in the singular. The proof can also be deduced from § 19, because since according to the form of being absolute identity is an infinite self-knowing, so it is also an infinite subject and object in quantitative difference and indifference' (Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, in F. W. J. Schelling, *Schriften 1801: Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie und andere Texte*, Stuttgart: Frommann Holzboog, 2009, § 12). The translations of this and other works of Schelling quoted in this text are mine.

Schelling is right to call this knowledge 'contemplation' (*Anschauung*) and repeat the withdrawn, perhaps deliberately understated formulation of Spinoza about the third kind of knowledge, exceeding the one of the senses and the intellect:<sup>2</sup> 'There is no philosophy except from the point of view of the absolute'.<sup>3</sup> This is contemplation or revelation as self-revelation (*Selbstoffenbarung*) indeed since it opens paths which cannot be all walked and points to perspectives which consciousness has to comprise all at once. Thinking sees further and further into the chain of being, manifestation, and becoming, and finds simultaneousness and unity of all appearances, relations, forms, processes.

Everything particular and discrete, which in the slowed down cadence of ordinary consciousness is grasped as separate aspect or side is an abstraction.<sup>4</sup> In itself, it is the same infinite process given in inexplicable one-sidedness, so that what is developed or better, has developed itself as multifaceted manifestation is singular entity only in the exaggerated determination of understanding; it is something available for the senses, actual as an intuition, to which reason relates again and again, seeking to establish a link with the rest.

Experiential knowledge, as laid open by Kant, conceals a specific dependence, and a certain enclosure of knowledge. It contains a primary indeterminacy of thinking which is property of the thinking that reaches determinacy and the spontaneity that acts under the constraints of the fixed frames of manifestation. Something is given, and we think it, approaching it with the categories of understanding as forms of relation of representations. We use them to bring our representations to the highest level of generality, the utmost degree of consolidation. This is experience, the mode of empirical consciousness embodied within the frames of human receptivity.

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2. The third kind of Intuitive knowledge leads 'to the knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God, which every idea involves' and is 'adequate and perfect'. (B. Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding. The Ethics. The Correspondence*, trans. R.H. M. Elwes, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1992, Theorem 46).

3. 'Es giebt keine Philosophie, als vom Standpunkt des Absoluten . . .' (Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems*, § 2, Note).

4. 'From this follows that, from the point of view of reason there is no finitude and to consider things as finite is to consider them not as they are in themselves. In the same way to consider things as different or as manifold would mean that we do not consider them by themselves or from the point of view of reason' (Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems*, § 14, Add).

Schelling offers the articulation of another type of consciousness which is not discursive. He seeks the restoration of the approach of Spinoza and the ecstasis of Plotinus, whose names along with that of Böhme are also mentioned by Novalis and Hegel. There is no doubt that what plays itself out in Schelling's earlier work is to a degree blurry, that there is rashness, genius, drive, and much from the spontaneity of creation in art of which Schelling speaks so highly. His philosophy seeks the pure dimensions and the pure concepts, but in their truth, they have a concrete, infinite, living sense and a meaning that cannot be fully preserved and exposed theoretically.<sup>5</sup> The formulations of identity, potencies and degrees, remind one of actual alchemic codes, which are operative and alive not as abstract concepts, but as living formulae of the living, showing themselves as processes and reality.<sup>6</sup>

Here on the scene comes Kant and his description of the operation of experience and discursive cognition, to which one has to reduce these revelations of consciousness. This limited kind of knowledge can articulate only certain aspects and elements, but grasp the whole only in a remote and abstract manner. Its concepts require intuition; they demand connections and synthesis of the given and unity of the contents of experience. In Schelling, everything that one has as knowledge of the understanding is activated and brought forth again now manifesting itself as unfolded by the formulae of identity and totality. This is another movement of reason in line with the synthesis of the manifold of experience and the unity of the representations in one single consciousness.

The given totality of the representations is an organised whole of relations and derivations, this time from the top downward: from ideas of an absolute reason down to the concepts as functions of

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5. Their exposition is secondary and different from creation where they are embodied, alive. This corresponds to the highest place assigned to art. Reason in its truth is a demiurge; art is its highest practice and action from freedom.

6. Examples—the treatment of carbon, nitrogen, and then iron, water as principles of dynamism, the theory of metamorphosis and so on. There is no doubt that the so called 'speculative physics' delves deep into the borderline spheres of knowledge—alchemy, ancient religions, Gnosticism, etc. This openness is brought about by the thesis of knowledge with no presuppositions, which must reach the foundation and demonstrate itself in everything—transcendental logic, natural sciences, history, religion—with unprecedented scale and ambition. There is something titanic about this, which seems almost incomprehensible to us given the narrow notions of rationality with which we operate.



unity of given representations. As pure concepts, they unfold their content of unity of thought and empirical determination. What one has to do is follow the concept in a certain direction—of objectivity, of thought—towards the subject ‘spirit’, the subject ‘matter’ or ‘being’, etc. The determinations will manifest themselves as general functions of unity of accumulated representations, leading to new levels of understanding of the phenomenal. To describe this process, one can use the Hegelian term of self-movement of the concept, where speculation does not add or alter anything, and only observes the unfolding of the concept itself, opening its contents before thinking.

Schelling, especially his philosophy of nature, shows precisely this type of movement and dynamism of revelation, which contains penetrating formulations of utter unity and interconnection of the objective, material world. One determination, a thesis or a category, for example, ‘matter’, is first given in an abstract formulation as ‘the first relative totality’.<sup>7</sup> In the next step, this formulation displays the multi-dimensionality of the given objectivity. ‘What we call matter is in itself not matter, but the absolute identity itself, as far as it contains the condition for the first becoming of reality by A and B....All matter is initially liquid’.<sup>8</sup>

The essence of identity called ‘matter’ now produces a new determination and another level and mode of understanding of its materiality. And so one and the same field of objectivity, taken initially in the perspective of metaphysics, then in the perspective of scientific cognition and the ordinary notions of the understanding (reason-object) shows itself as an infinite content, or as an infinite continuation of identification, which has to be pursued and thought through in all directions, without constraint.

The object (the given *x*) towards which, according to the Kantian standpoint, we relate by means of concepts ordering the manifold and offering unity of the *I* in relation to it, manifests itself as a moving object and as the objective in general. The direct relation to a given object of consciousness—seen as unity of the manifold of given representations—reveals an infinite object and a movement of that givenness as the unfolding of objectivity itself. It cancels the notion of identity which the *I* has for itself and removes its mode of self-determination. The movement of contemplation

7. Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems*, § 51.

8. Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems*, § 54, Add. 3.

draws consciousness on and leads to a similar unfolding of the I, in line with the constitution of consciousness in Kant. The I which stands in relation of opposition to the concrete content of knowledge supersedes the directedness which has determined it, and manifests itself as a movement of dissolution in the identity which is finally its true essence, its self.<sup>9</sup>

This movement could be described in various ways. In Schelling's texts on the philosophy of nature, one can see it to occur in the opposite way. There the very objectivity—the concept for it—sublates the direct perspective of determinacy. As a result, the movement of the object (of B as pole of objectivity) is also a movement of subjectivity (of A). The sublation of the direct perspective of thinking of thinking—self-consciousness doubled in the formula of adequacy (I-object, concrete content-concrete I)—brings to light the real implications of Kant's transcendental position. The thing in itself, as an unknown, given in the aspect of the duality 'receptivity-spontaneity' and 'intuition-concept', reveals itself in the dynamics of the movement. Fichte develops the formulations of this movement in the categories of pure reason, by means of a description of the doubling activity of the I. And if with him, due to the necessary lack of content, this dynamics of I, non-I and identity of I and non-I, could, at times, appear as the empty circling of thinking, the final result of which is not completely certain, in Schelling this movement occurs on a different ground, on the side of the non-I, the objective, and the given.

Paradoxically, Schelling's ability to see the given as dynamic and infinite validates one of the essential characteristics of consciousness as exposed by Kant: its indeterminacy. Experience is locked between two indeterminacies or rather two indeterminables. The I in the transcendental apperception 'I think' is defined exclusively as a function of unity of representations. In a certain sense, this is a determination of passivity and of receptivity. Sensibility is the capacity to receive representations and the very act of reception or acceptance requires connection. It is conceived as occurring in time; thus

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9. 'Beyond self-consciousness the I is pure objectivity. This pure objective (and precisely because of that this primary un-objective, because objective without subjective is impossible), is the only 'in itself' there is. Subjectivity is added first through self-consciousness' (*Schelling, System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1992), 57/III 390). Subjectivity is a clash (*Streit*) in which is born the absolute synthesis, the identity of self-consciousness as unitary act which has to contain 'an infinite number of acts' ('eine Unendlichkeit von Handlungen', 60/III 393).

reason conditions itself as an I and as acting in the act of connection itself. There it unifies, retains and thinks, and shows itself capable of moving through the contents of its representations, conscious of their unity and able to bind and divide the intuitable.

The resulting formulation of the I defines it as limited acting, bound to the representation, a spontaneity to go through the existing notions and images. And because we speak of givenness, and full, not empty or blind notions, this is the freedom of the I to evoke the representations, put itself in the presence of objectivity and function in the empirical world. For Kant, experience is a matrix, a system of finite dimensions, which allows movement in certain trajectories and types of comprehension of the given. It is spontaneity of a different kind of identity: the identity of experience as the always renewed repetition of the bounded spontaneity of reason and of its essential deficiency.

We think, and we come in the presence of representations. We reflect, we seek—and demand newer and more general representations along the lines of connection, already made and offered to consciousness and now only summoned, recalled. Experience is repetition; thinking itself is repetitive, and therefore pure reason, according to Kant, must necessarily end its movement of representations in the antinomies. There again we have repetitiveness and duplication: of the attempt of exit, of a breakthrough, of truth.

Reason is unwhole, incomplete; it is a spontaneity that comes with the weight of the given. And thus, the search itself which always points to a beyond: beyond the concrete, the given, and the world, beyond repetition and experience itself (the old and recalled cognisance)—lays out an image of the act of transcendence, a picture of the moment of overcoming and going beyond the confines of the system. Spontaneity, in Kant's transcendental dialectic, signifies one and the same indeterminate content: ignorance, half-concept, absence of representation, i.e., of receptivity.

And so the driving element—reason—is propelled towards a predetermined path of impossibility. It comes to the need of comprehension and to the inability to reach what before that has appeared as almost clear, almost distinct. What is wanted is revelation. Reason prepares itself for the givenness of the universal, for a reception of the true. It thinks this givenness. It projects the whole, the totality, the absolute; but at least in Kant, revelation does not come and could not have come. The structure of our consciousness is such

that it can direct itself in certain ways. It contains spontaneity and possibility to comprehend what occurs with it, which grounds the possibility of the attainment of the whole. Yet this search cannot be satisfied; what is wanted stands behind the given and is inextricably linked to acts of consciousness. It is beyond the represented and the act of representation, beyond the very coming of reason to the point of expansion, of quest. Reason is then the movement towards truth and the consciousness of the attempt for comprehension.

All this as meaning of the critique becomes apparent in the perspective of Schelling, and the accomplished breaking of the confines of experience. Here one can go very far. In the implementation of the plan of his transcendental analysis, Kant reaches the ground of spontaneity-receptivity, which as duality stands on a higher level of clarity. At the root of thinking and representation itself—that is, of the I-object and every empirical consciousness—stands the schematism of pure understanding as a semi-clarified interrelation of givenness and comprehension. It is a quasi-appearance ordering the manifold of experience according to the pure intuition of time, from which grows out, in its fullness, the consciousness of constraint, of a world, and of experience as a whole. Thinking is bound to its own a priori conditions of receptivity, and henceforth, our spontaneity is intertwined with what is possible in schematism. What we seek has to come through the scheme and yet it cannot appear in this way.

The schema provides a product. It works, and precisely this work defines the impossibility of metaphysics, the necessity of the antinomies, and our remaining in the divisions of consciousness, and the types of philosophy which the critique investigates. Kant states: reason seeks the unconditional in the series of conditions. In other words, it seeks to leave its boundaries and bring forth the pure subject, the pure object and the very things in themselves. It needs to go beyond its functions of intermediary and cut across the all-encompassing duality of experience. Yet, this cannot be done. Reason cannot have intuitions for objectivity and ourselves as we truly are. We have only this—experience—and what we can derive from it as conditions of necessity (analytics). The only necessary and universal element here is experience itself, along with the principles of understanding, schematism, and the antinomies. They are common for us people, the beings with experience, with intuition.

Nevertheless, if one thinks through the schematism of the concepts and the structure of cognition revealed in the transcendental

analytics of Kant, things go beyond what is claimed to be the case. Metaphysics is impossible not because—not only because—we do not have intuitions for the concepts which express the unconditional, but because we cannot have receptivity for the unconditional itself; it cannot appear to us. Nothing corresponds to those overreaching concepts of totality in the series of conditions; we can depend only on the conditioned, the phenomenal, the cognised. Things in themselves remain unknown; the concepts through which we approach them signify only a direction and mark out a space which cannot be filled in. We comprehend only what is present as pre-sent, empirical, within the sphere of experience and under its conditions aesthetic, logical, transcendental.

The thesis of schematism seems to reveal something else: a primordial closure, an emptiness in the very metaphysical project, and an indeterminacy in the movement towards the unconditional. Our problem as rational beings is not that we cannot have intuitions to complete our otherwise perfectly suited concepts, but rather that these concepts are blurred, and that the very character of the initiated search remains unclear. The very quest or expectation of metaphysics must be considered to be a result of the transcendental conditions of our consciousness. Hence, what we predetermine as absolute and imagine as absolute knowledge, ought to be considered as a product of a cognitive ability generating experiential determinations and experiential consciousness. The very movement of transcendence and overcoming of experience must remain—reversing the meaning of Schelling's formulation—within the boundaries of the identity of reason.

For Kant, metaphysics as a project, as a quest, is the product of spontaneity-receptivity, and the problem is not that we cannot have receptivity adequate to the pure concepts of understanding, as if they lie outside the schemes, but rather that what is projected through them is a consequence of the scheme and a movement of the same not fully examined cognitive ability, standing at the foundation.<sup>10</sup>

Going back to Schelling and the project of philosophy as a similar type of openness of reason, one comes to the conclusion that, with Kant, metaphysics is impossible precisely because it is a derivative product of the finite architectonics of cognition. It is the idea of the completion of experience, the master-plan of a matrix or a super-scheme of the empirical attained through the natural

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10. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 179–180

movement of thought along the lines of association of representations and functions of experience.

Metaphysics makes no leap; it affects no change. Instead, it corresponds to something that Kant calls a need or a natural tendency to expand the consciousness functioning in experience to a certain type of positions of comprehension and a certain set of concepts and representations which would explain objectivity as a whole. However, these special concepts and representations carry the traits of the constituted experience and remain close to its basis. In reality with them we seek and expect nothing, and only continue the reflex of presentation, of the need for an image. It is this expectation that sets the border that divides and closes experience in givenness. What is given is the representation and the striving for something more, a beyond, unrelated to representations of the available kind. Yet this expectation is not met, and only serves to vindicate experience and 'our' type of givenness, 'our' type of consciousness.

The problem is that metaphysics appears as a continuation of experience, as super-experience, imbued with the same rhythm and forms of comprehension with which we approach actuality: a direct relation of a subject to an object, requiring exposition of concepts, intuitions and so forth. The failure of our search by the means of a notion of 'metaphysical things' in the light of the methodological considerations of Fichte and Schelling is a failure of an unexamined search, and of a unreflective movement of thought. Another type of search and another approach—science of knowledge, transcendental system of idealism—would provide what we are looking for, which will demonstrate itself as a result.

The thesis of Schelling is that metaphysics is possible and that our knowledge of what Kant calls 'things in themselves' is accessible, but that this happens through a form of thinking which exceeds the pre-given mode of experience with its concepts and operations. Thus we come to the heightened awareness of contrast between Kant's analysis of impossibility and Schelling's demonstration of the actual reality of absolute knowledge, and the possibility of going to things themselves. Behind these things stands reason in itself (*an sich*), the identity, projections of which are we ourselves. It is here, in the infinite field of truth opened for thinking by Schelling that Hegel begins, as on the promised land of reason, which now has to be ploughed.



# Kant and the Problem of Continuation

Is it possible that Kant has reached the deepest determination of our knowledge and presented it to us? Not in its entirety, perhaps; surely, not in its entirety, but still with sufficient clarity with regard to its principles? The question concerns the fundamental understanding of experience and the essence of knowledge. It touches on a ground-laying intuition, something simple, ordinary, and in a certain sense, banal; some primitive, elemental characteristic of knowledge, to which it holds fast even if left unreflected and open to logical challenge. If this were so, there would be nothing much to challenge. The task would be to hold fast to this single dimension and stay with the self-evident and self-imposing centre of knowledge laid bare in transcendental perspective.

Fichte speaks of this as immediacy (*Unmittelbarkeit*) and as a form of thinking which comes truly only at the end of transcendental self-examination. One starts with it in the easy presence of the empirical reality and it is everything that is purely, by itself, already there, known as 'being', 'things' but also as 'thought', 'consciousness', 'I'. Yet, it is all a product, something attained, and only artificially simple. This understanding of everything, perceived here and now, the world and I in this moment—how hard it is to talk about what is most simple, nearest to thought—the very thinking, the very language in its flowing, natural presence, bear the totality and immediacy of the entire reason in its systematicity.

The idea of a logic of immediacy, of an exposition of the entire knowledge in all its forms, figures and movements, originates



with Kant as a system of all possible experience. This is the idea of a reconstruction of the totality of reason, encompassing everything present, ready at hand and determined in mind; a system of immediacy and of the most concrete, most transient: the self-positing I, here, now, not in abstract-philosophical, but in its simple, direct manifestation. In its full scale, this idea is implemented in Schelling in the formulae of identity that leave nothing beside and render any question about the essence of the concrete into a question about the absolute (*die Totalität*).

For Schelling philosophy cannot lack continuity; it does not allow fragmentation. The comprehension of anything could only occur in the transcendental perspective of Kant and requires the construction of the entire system of reason in all its determinations. With the formulations of the I in Fichte, it becomes impossible to present anything less than the whole. One must define everything or not start at all because the result would be only a reflection or a mere application of a principle and a method, with which one must attain comprehension of the very movement of the foundation.

Schelling grounds the outlines of systematicity in the absolute, i.e., in identity (*absolute Identität*) which comprises relative identity and relative totality (*relative Totalität*). This move necessitates the shift of the Kantian viewpoint and the elements of transcendental analysis with all its steps, categories and interrelations closer to the dimensions of totality of the system of Spinoza, up to the absolute limit of the identity  $A=A$ . It is not enough to grasp the schematism of the concepts or show the connection between the ready positioning points of understanding; this would be too close to the beginning of a true system of reason, too far from its attainment. The objective is to go beyond the deduction of the categories to the deduction of the very dialectics of thinking and the construction of the teleological and aesthetical judgements; not simply to explain these forms of thinking, but thinking itself.

This is a movement attempted by Schelling and, later on, Hegel. To what degree do they succeed? It is hard to judge, because to propose an answer one has to think through the system and its principle—the very identity—up to its highest limit and down to its depth. This would mean, effectively, to try and create once again a system of transcendental idealism, a phenomenology of the spirit, and a science of logic. We do not want to do that. It is not needed,

not possible, and would only recall the odd plays of phantasy of Borges and the idea of a renewed authorship.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, this is an important question because the lack of desire to even consider something like this shows that with regard to the absolute we accept a standard which neither Schelling nor Hegel have ever used. We are ready for a secondary analysis, capable of a historical or reflectory approach, in which we are entirely dependent on the way they have dealt with the theme and the project. We allow the project and its implementation to coincide and appear as one, presenting the only possible and meaningful realisation.

The direction of the discussion back to Kant and the attempt to rethink what is given by Schelling and Hegel in the light of the critique opens the opportunity to assess the inherent power of the project and evaluate its chances separate from its implementation. It allows one to trace the soft spots of the system, observe the treads that they followed in order to go beyond Kant and reveal the moments of interruption of the power of initial enthusiasm. One could see where they must leave the secure ground of transcendental analysis and continue on their own, with no conceptual map to rely on, burdened by side thoughts of wandering, inability and loss, and by the decision to take a definite route. This is the moment of the system as a choice, not a necessity; the system as responsibility.

I.

What should a system have as an internal form and a relation to its factual material? What should precede it as a foundation? In other words: What makes Schelling and Hegel believe that they could overcome Kant, that they have the resources to do that? What are they counting on?

Perhaps, on the belief in the power of the present in thought, the spectre of totality of the immediate and the visible, that is, of the thinkable—that which is in actuality, the derived, the re-presented. This is, perhaps, their grounding intuition, or ground-laying illusion: the illusion of the possibility of the system as given, adequate, and true. The system arranges the availabilities; the concept is announced as the true form of relation. It is what is adequate

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1. See J. L. Borges' story 'Pierre Menard. Author of the Don Quixote', in *Labyrinths*, trans. D. A. Yates and J. E. Irby, New York: New Directions Paperback, 2007.

and includes in itself the complexity and depth of everything that is there, in our presence, all that could be placed in the scheme subject-object. The concept goes beyond that scheme, beyond the relation that it contains; it sublates itself, yet the chief moment here is the aspect of the content, of the thinkable.<sup>2</sup> This is presented as overcoming of the critique's incompleteness and inconsistency. The logic and the movement of the concept require the explication of the elements of judgement (subject, predicate, object) and of syllogism; the form that contains and everything that is contained therein are to be taken as dimensions of thought and moments of thinking as the ultimate activity.

So the path is first to define the thinkable, then the form of thinking of the thinkable, and finally, thinking itself as far as it is given in the different modes and forms of content, determination, and relation. The forms are: concrete thinking (set in the relation of thinking–thinkable) and the thinking which holds the contents and sustains the thinkable (in the formula of Fichte  $A=B$  but as  $A=A$ ).<sup>3</sup>

Following Schelling, Hegel applies this formula to thinking. Identity and difference are potencies (*Potenz*) of thought and so potencies of the absolute; being concept, idea are seen in movement towards absolute knowledge or absolute polarization  $+$   $-$ . The end is absolute identity in absolute difference, which in Hegel's terminology is negativity relating itself to itself.<sup>4</sup> But this formula—of negativity, of identity, which does not go beyond Schelling with an added dynamic component—itself remains tied to the content; it is fixed to the given and to what is brought to appearance. Everything we know about that which moves is derived from the moved, from the product. The moving itself is absent. In this approach, there is something from the art of the trapper, where one advances on the basis of proofs—footprints, signs, products. The living is given through traces and remains; and this is precisely a difficulty foreseen by Kant and expressed in his insistence on the emptiness of such an approach as a matter of principle.

For all its roughness, the hunting comparison shows a difference which persists and which is not eliminated by Schelling, and,

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2. See Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989, 826.

3. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1961, 1:109–111.

4. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 835–36.

later, Hegel with his logic of the absolute idea as self-determination. The highest determination there is that of Aristotle's thinking of thinking, redefined as negativity in relation to itself and endowed with a purely logical, 'non metaphysical' meaning.<sup>5</sup> It contains a disparity, because the ground, or more precisely, the level from which one begins in order to define thinking (the absolute, the identity) is the thought of (the immediate, the given), which is in effect the same material from which Kant himself begins: experience.

This is what we *have*, *what is*. From it one derives the meaning and manner of this 'having', its capacity to be had, its presence and status as an object for thinking. Everything is taken from there. Kant asserts that from such a beginning nothing could be achieved, because what is derived from the present cannot itself be made present; it cannot be *had* in the same manner of givenness, or manifestation. What could be achieved is another type of givenness, which can offer only a second-hand, derivative presence of a scheme or a stretched out concept. Taken out of its empirical signification, it will remain an abstraction and a formula without the power and qualities of the real.

In order to go forward, Schelling relies on the analysis of Fichte and the principal setting of Spinoza. Following him, Hegel takes Kant's critical warnings as the result of an accurate description of a form of thinking, which could be used; what brings forward and what is brought forward by Kant's analysis is the concept, and in this there is logical necessity and validity, i.e., universality and apodicticity. For Hegel, Kant's criticisms of dialectic remove the barriers which they want to impose, and help to establish the truth of the concept and of reason as such, which is shown to comprise the empirical, intuitive component, on which Kant insists. The concept is said to be deduced and established in a different, undogmatic way, as self-evident, universal and apodictic movement directing itself to itself.

Kant saw the potential for such developments and defined them as empty movements of thought resulting in blind concepts, without content to give them real meaning or shape.<sup>6</sup> Everything that could be produced in this way would be either metaphysical, i.e., ascribed illegitimately ('being', 'substance', etc.), or empty (schematic, secondary).

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5. The *Encyclopaedia* ends with a quotation of Aristotle's *Metaphysica* XI 7, the *Science of Logic* – with a reference of the same point.

6. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 390–96.

Schelling and Hegel are quite careful with the first kind of threat and do not in fact present anything that could be qualified as dogmatic or metaphysical. The determinations of the absolute identity of Schelling and the absolute idea of Hegel are purely methodological in nature. They appear to lack content and from the point of view of metaphysics, or faith, are disappointing. 'Identity', 'negativity', 'unity of the entire movement', 'a self-generating and self-sublating identity  $A=A$ ,  $A=B$ ': this as negativity is announced as the truth of the idea in all its forms. In Hegel, the entire content with all levels and potencies falls under the formula  $A=A$ , taken as a formula of the energy of negativity. The other, final determination of the practical philosophy—the philosophy of the spirit—is concrete and concerns reason in art, history, or religion, but these are specific forms and manifestations, from which retrospectively is defined the source of manifestation. For Hegel, the spirit reaches its fullest determination in philosophy, and then again, in the concept as pure thinking or logic. Thus there is tension in the development of the system, clearly anticipated by Kant, and yet taken up and implemented after him in seeming compliance with his transcendental criteria. Resulting in what?

The main question here is that of the philosophical value of the absolute determination of the idea in Hegel. Why does what seems meagre and inadequate for Kant seem sufficient and final for Hegel? There are two approaches that could be taken: one, theoretical, using pure arguments (logic, metaphysics) and explicating the result in a transcendental sense; and two, practical, using Popper's principle of falsification and investigating its application in history; the consequences, in this case, the moral and political doctrine, must provide the answer to the questions about the actual worth of the principle.





# HEGEL

The method is therefore to be recognised as the unrestrictedly universal, internal and external mode; and as the absolute infinite force, to which no object, presenting itself as something external, remote from and independent of reason, could offer resistance . . .

*Science of Logic* (1816), 826.





# Subjectivity

The beginning has to be taken from Schelling's discovery of the status of subjectivity as an element—unfolding, active, attaining and containing element—and yet, still, as only an aspect or side not unlike an angle in a spatial geometric figure. This kind of relation contains adequacy, difference and opposition, yet the opposition belongs to the outline of the figure:

Subjectivity and objectivity could be posited only as predominant in opposite directions. . . . (Add.) The form of being of absolute identity can, therefore, be conceived of under the image of a line, where in each opposite direction is posited one and the same identity, but so that in the opposite directions predominate A or B, but at the point of balance is found the very  $A=A$ .<sup>1</sup>

In the geometrical demonstration of Schelling, the distance builds the form; its measures define the figure itself. The notion of a line used here is the notion of the first, primary element, which sustains both sides and lays itself out in them. They are its 'in itself', not the opposition of their relation but the integrity of the line that unites them. What Kant explains but does not proceed to present in a manner that could agree with the approach of Schelling and now Hegel, is the interrelation of the subject-object and the mutual constitution of the two sides or poles.

Kant operates with a structure that links and defines both, so that the subject and the object are only what is deduced from the function of the unity of representations—out of the material of a perceived objectivity, the texture of a world. The reflection on the thread that holds it together unravels the bright picture of reality

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1. Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems*, § 46. See also § 47–49.

and leads to the activity of the subject and its own self-determination. One and the same thread constitutes the object and builds the portrait of the subject. When one tries to untwine it, at the place of the world remains nothing; and this *nothing* is the *thing in itself*, the concept of an absence or a space where there was experience, perception, life.

Transcendental critique deprives experience of its dimensions and unfolds it into itself, and we are conscious only of this act of deprivation or retraction of the opposition subject-object constituting our consciousness: I in a world. The same holds true for the subject, where the movement of retraction deprives the subject of its own 'natural' determinations. What is brought to appearance is collected back. In place of the vivid perspective of objectivity stands the consciousness of appearance and the sense of difference between the immediate feeling, desiring consciousness (the I) and that which remains as an 'x' or a remnant of the deconstruction of representation and the unravelling of its fabric: 'x – world – x' or 'x – experience – x'.<sup>2</sup>

In line with the formulae of Fichte, the Kantian thesis could be reduced to that  $A=A$ , where A is experience, so that we have knowledge only of and in experience. Everything else is an 'x', an unknown, and therefore cannot be the identity itself, but only an element or a basis for it. Experience contains the difference and so everything that can be known.

For Hegel, there is incompleteness and inconsistency in this position. The law of identity has to include the critique as well. The centre of identity is thinking and it should comprise everything. This means that subjectivity is as provisionally defined as objectivity, and that none of them can be regarded as a centre. What has to be comprehended is the structure of the figure itself, the integrity of the posited determination. Hence, any determination is a line, or an openness, which is a part of the coordinate system of the figure, unfolded within the dimensions of an already given, primary structure, carrying in itself the 'spatiality' of the figure.

Each category suggests an internal conceptual orientation, which brings forth its specific content. It suggests a constitution and only in this manner can it be related to other categories and form part of proposition. Such a relation does not imply universality and ultimacy but rather a level of determinability and construction, i.e.,

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2. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 420.

a degree of conceptuality. For Hegel, below everything else there is a concept as a ground-laying element, which while remaining identical to itself, determines itself and gives at any point a new level of openness and dimension of difference, positioning and materiality.<sup>3</sup> This concept is similar to the Pythagorean image of a line constantly unfolding itself out of a centre point. It first extends in a line, then in a structure in a three-dimensional space, and finally to a sphere, an enlarged form of the same point, comprising all forms of orientation, positioning and relation.

For Hegel, the consciousness of this structure, not just of experience but of thinking itself is what makes the logic the first, and, in a sense, sole science.<sup>4</sup> It implies that every element of experience, particular act of reasoning and of speech is a relative centre of the whole. Everything in it points towards the constitutive structure of the whole and the process that supports it.

1.

The result is an endless turn of the perspective as the main trait of the *Science of Logic*. The manner in which this happens is quite clear: through the movement of negation, as negation of negation. Negativity introduces dynamics, action, and initiates a turn—a radical, Copernican turn—causing dizziness from the constant change of perspective of thinking and the use of the formulae of negativity. Hegel often refers to the phrase of Spinoza ‘omnis determination est negatio’ and the approach here is similar. Every definite concept, position of thinking or natural structure of language is approached as determination, posited and sustained in relation to something else, which does not show itself openly but exhibits it—the defined in truthfulness (*alethea*, the visibility of reason) materiality of thinking.

That which is shown and stands immediately before one’s eyes, the cognitive movement which is set as possible in comprehending an object—one can take the examples of Descartes in search of the

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3. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 85–86.

4. The other sciences are of a different type; they implement the principles of the logic. In the beginning is the logos, or the concept. ‘Im Anfang war das Wort, und das Wort war bei Gott, und Gott war das Wort’ (Johannes 1–3). All ‘divine’ references in the *Science of Logic* including the famous ‘God before creation’ (‘Darstellung Gottes, wie er in seinem ewigen Wesen vor der Erschaffung der Natur und des endlichen Geistes ist’) are led by this passage as principle. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 50, 825, 843.

unconditional with the rectangular tower, which in the distance looks round, the disappearing form of the wax under the warmth of our fingers—are positions of givenness, showings of presence and truth. This truth, however, is posited: a truth under conditions, set as a fragment, as a display. The authenticity of the immediate—of the object, the category, the identification of separate thought-forms in general—is posited in the perspective of conditions that remain hidden and yet sustain this presence.

This is the reason why some researchers of Hegel (De Vos, Fulda and others)<sup>5</sup> emphasise the relationship of Hegel to scepticism and consider the *Logic* as freed of any ontological meaning exercise in the repositioning of thinking: sense—given, thought—condition. The analysis of the conditioned becomes an analysis of the givenness of the condition itself, following the path of conditions of truth in a formal aspect (truth-makers).

There is no doubt that Hegel presents this aspect, and that the perspective is, at least partly, such. The logic shows the negation constructing the definiteness of the thought-determinations—the visibility of knowledge, the thought-objects—and the possibility to operate with them. This is a consistent work of transcendental critique taken without restriction and relation to otherness. If experience disappears, replaced by transcendental conditions of its possibility, one should no longer return to it and try to transfer the speculative revelations of what lies there back to it; the relation is lost.

The validity of experience disappears as soon as the perspective of the conditions of possibility is introduced. It is followed by a question about the conditions of possibility of transcendental analysis itself—the issue of transcendental truth—and its capacity to identify elements and exhibit functions of unity and chains of conditioning.<sup>6</sup> Under consideration is the identity of the transcendental conditions, the forms and principles of transcendental cognition, as well as the mode in which they are thought of and presented.

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5. See L. De Vos, 'Gott oder die absolute Idee', in *Hegel-Studien*, Band 29, Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1994, 103–116. See H. F. Fulda, *Hegel*, München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2003. See also K. Hartmann, 'Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View', in A. MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Anchor Books, 1972.

6. Under question is the entire instrumentarium of Kant—the sources of knowledge, forms of givenness, connection, apperception, regulative principles.

For Hegel, transcendentality is connected to a certain freedom of thought and ‘materiality’ of thinking, which is again similarly given and conditioned in a perspective that one must be reflect upon. So the very notions of truth, thinking and of thinkable change. The condition has little to do with the conditioned. And the deeper one goes into the analysis of conditionality—of truthfulness and the conceivability of the objects of thought (the physical, mathematical, logical ‘things’)—the more abstract and impossible to accept in a linear perspective, becomes the exposition itself. This is the main difficulty of *Science of Logic*, a difficulty which can only be overcome if one remembers the thread that leads Hegel’s ahead—the relation with the dialectic of Plato and the distinctions of Aristotle—and helps him advance where Kant believes one has to end, allowing him to explore the idea of a transcendental logic, a logic of truth.

Taken in this way, speculative logic shows the actual interconnection of everything and the relativity of objectivity. It is confirmed by the capacity of transcendental analysis to sink in any level of objectivity, take in any form and degree of consciousness and reveal dynamism, constitution, and construction. And this is not a sign of transitoriness and illusion, but of the internal nature of thinking and of the position points in it. Everything is related; hence, thinking remains one in itself and in its movement.<sup>7</sup> And the more inward it goes, the more concrete and vivid are its immediate objects, the sharper are the lines of the differentiation of being in itself (of the concept), and the more categorical is the transformation of the whole. Thus for Hegel, the all-concealing veil of ‘visibility’ of the given forms of thought—the thing, substance, life, the inner subjective perspective of the practical idea—gives only a more subtle but also a more complete relationship to the whole. In other words, the more distinct and concrete the object of thought, the stronger the connection of ground-laying and appearance. The degrees of clarity and truth are degrees of positing in an increasingly complex unity of identity. The distinctiveness of the object brings to light the

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7. Hortsman and Halfwassen speak of the science of logic as ‘henologie’. See R. P. Horstmann, ‘Hegel über Unendlichkeit, Substanz, Subjekt’, in *International Yearbook of German Idealism* 1, K. Ameriks and J. Stolzenberg (eds.), Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003; J. Halfwassen, ‘Die Bedeutung des Spätantiken Platonismus für Hegels Denkenentwicklung in Frankfurt und Jena’, in *Hegel-Studien*, Band 33, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998.

condition, the character of the whole and the intensity of identity and actual positing.<sup>8</sup>

What makes the project of *Science of Logic* so firm in its principle of construction—as a continuation and fulfilment of the series of idealistic ‘prophecies’ of Fichte in his *Wissenschaftslehre*—is the principle of plasticity of thinking. It is demonstrated most clearly in the treatment of infinity and the restoration of the dialectic of opposite extremes finite–infinite. In order to affirm the infinite, one must confirm the finite. The successive conditioning of the higher category by means of mediation of the preceding negations and affirmations of thinking demonstrates the preservation of identity and the work of its principle.

The affirmation of the I—the very thought of oneself, ‘I am’, ‘I think’, ‘I know’—is a continuation of a succession of negations and sublations. The thought ‘I’ is in itself an act of a priori synthesis of the sequence of the preceding movements; it is a preconditioned unity, and a determined singularity of connection and sublation of everything in this manner. As noted previously for Fichte, consciousness is inscribed in consciousness in consciousness as in q pattern of concentric circles; the movements are laid in one another, becoming a single movement issuing from the same centre and following the same rhythm. Tracing it, one can go back to the beginning and then go forward, to the immediacy of self-consciousness.

This is, then, how Hegel breaks the boundaries of thinking. He has a method (dialectic) and a principle (negation of negation) that can and should apply unconditionally. He also has an example, which, according to him, offers a solution to the problems that modern philosophers and especially Kant have seen as final. Like in a medieval map, they have drawn borders beyond which they put inscriptions warning of monsters—‘Hic Sunt Monstra!’—conflicts, quarrels, illusions, which is dangerous and senseless to pursue. The problem is that there are examples of excursions in these areas, maps of a different scale: Plato, Aristotle, Proclus, even Böhme.<sup>9</sup> So for Hegel, the maps should be redrawn, and this is the objective of the science of logic; it is a movement in the uncharted waters of

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8. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 841–42.

9. This is the idea of Hegel’s lecture cycle on the history of philosophy which has to deflate the Kantian claim for completion of philosophy. See also *Science of Logic*, 777, where it is said that Kant knew and responded only to the new metaphysics but nowhere turned to consider the old.

incomplete descriptions, an armed with a method advance through the layers of truth, and the forms of thinking (concept, proposition, syllogism), seen as figures of negation in relation to itself.

The problem of incomprehensibility of Hegel is connected to this shift of the boundary of thinking farther and farther away from the centre and the orientation points, which we have in the world of experience and perception. Of course, this difficulty exists also in Kant, but there the exposition still remains in the terms of possibility of the representations; they are its building blocks, and the moments of thought revealed in the analytic of understanding, are referred back to experience as the dimension of truth. Kant speaks of connection, synthesis, a priori, so everything is set in relation to experience. But in Hegel this reference disappears, the important lies further. Methodologically, the beginning is taken from Kant, and what is now sought are the conditions of possibility of the transcendental critique and the very reconstruction of experience. This means that one passes in a new dimension of transcendental, which makes the overall orientation in the exposition very difficult.

Attractive in Hegel is the ending, the final clarity and distinctiveness of the world, of history, religion, art. The return to them from this movement deep into foundation of thought is a return to the world of experience from the dimensions of wholeness and totality of the system, a return from absolute knowledge. And in this return has always lied the strength of Hegel's philosophy—the consciousness of the absolute worth and exceptionality of human life, world, action, thinking. After reading him, the world stands before us as a dimension of the absolute, harmonious to the measure of the spirit, bearing in itself 'all the power and wealth of the idea'. The human being is revealed as a system, a self-positing wholeness and freedom under the light of the absolute, the idea, the spirit. Triumph of reason, apotheosis.

Yet, this distinctiveness of the result—somewhat imaginary—activates enthusiasm only if one has passed through it retaining the point of view of the representation. It is valid only if one has not—truly—experienced the reversals of logic, the deconstruction of one's knowledge in the advent of the idea. Only then, can one accept the result as a conclusion, as a Sabbath for philosophy. It is impossible to have truly grasped the infinite movement of negation, the reset of our thinking, and accept the result—the world redeemed by speculation, the restored possibility for an examined



life in freedom—as a simple givenness, and a reward of dialectic. Nothing is simple, neither in the exposition nor in the result. The revealed changes everything, and if the logic speaks of transparency and light, the imagery outside of it, in the sphere of objective spirit is different—gray, twilight of the present, and of history.<sup>10</sup> The infinite power of the method is the infinite power of negation, which speculation thinks, but the spirit must live through.

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10. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 360.





# Drive

Now let us turn to something else: to the beginning, the spirit before the system, ‘before creation’. There is the urge or drive (*Trieb*) towards the absolute, the will for an end, for limit and completion. There is also the drive to sustain a perspective, which goes beyond language, formal logic, and sense, because it has to unravel the very texture of thought. There is a break with the notion of the simple objectivity of consciousness, the belief in the appearances of thought, and a suggested and often used visualisation of thought as a particular kind of objectivity, a different type of ‘intelligible’ matter in contrast to the ‘solid’ matter of the visible and the real. An element of this could be seen even in Kant, with the idea of the categories as functions of unity of the ‘material of the manifold of experience’. Thought is conceived of as a formal principle, functional in relation to sensory perceptions, which in turn are given in relation to objects. Also in Kant, one finds the continuing imagery of a functional whole, and an architectonics of reason connected to the formative capacity of the understanding and the categories. This is a special kind of order, a pure form of consciousness, which determines relations, and institutes connections. Consciousness exhibits itself as a construction and a constitution, the formative principle of which—the principle of reason—is transferred downwards until it reaches schematism and the not entirely elucidated function of the faculty of imagination formatting experience and sensation itself as the primary element of cognition.

Hegel’s approach puts an end to all this. And if the influence of Aristotle is felt so strongly in the method and construction of the *Science of Logic* and the system as a whole, it is because Aristotle gives such attention to the clarification of the status of the thought

determinations (the categories), that is, of logos as predication and meaning. The approach here is always one of differentiation and analysis of the sense potential of a proposition. For Hegel, this requires decisiveness of the approach and rejection of relativity and the formal persistence in clarity, if by 'clarity' is meant the explication of the given—the representation (*Vorstellung*) as the first simple 'visibility' of thinking. With it, we remain bound to a level of acceptance of a special kind of subjectivity and one-sidedness, committed to a disproportionate fixation of the concept—of our thoughts, words, propositions—to 'reality', and what we can project as an opposite; something determinate and 'in itself', which can serve as truth-maker for our concepts in general.

The key problem for Hegel is the ambiguous character of the restrictions, which the adoption of such standard of clarity brings. On the one hand is the acceptance of an imagery of the world, the adoption of a certain measure, a 'value index' of reality as absolute. This is an 'absolute' grasped as a version of the given in experience, only separated, reflected in a more purified manner and brought up to the rank of a concept: the concept of the 'real', 'actual' in the objective (*Dinge an sich*), which carries in itself the substrate of intuition. In Kant intuition is accepted as primary level of meaning, as a concept, which we can approach as absolute, which we can rely on and leave the way it is, as basis of certainty. It has been thought of, ergo it is—the intuition as authenticity and as limit. On the other hand, in accepting this as sufficient, as something which is explained by leading to the concept of intuition—to 'thing in itself', an irreducible reminder, a substrate of the materiality of the world—we accept an imagery of the self. Transcendental consciousness, which has led us in the direction of scepticism with regard to the empirical and its 'sensory data' is now directed towards an elucidation of the subjective conditions of thinking, and the reversed perspective on the representations of experience.<sup>78</sup>

The direction towards the self yields an analysis of the positions of thinking and thought-determinations, which possess their determinateness as open parts of propositions, elements of sense. Thus just as transcendental reflection changes the status of objectivity, so it is now expected to do the same with subjectivity: the active, spontaneous side of cognition, with its transitions and synthesis, choice of strategies and freedom to act cognisantly.

Reflection does its work and brings out representations of activity, of ground-laying of meaning, and connection. The passive side is explained, so having it in front of us, we can now turn to describe the active side. Thus we have the determinations of the transcendental apperception 'I think' and of the I as practical reason and moral autonomy, adjudicating in it aesthetic and teleological spheres of knowledge. But for all the precision of the transcendental critique, which so carefully deduces conditions of possibility of the second source of cognition (the *other*), it still retains the character of principal limitation and incompleteness when it comes to the first. And it is precisely the clarity and the distinctiveness of Kant's reconstruction of the overall function of knowledge that for Hegel betray an element of the small scale ambitions and expectations, which cannot lead to truth. Hegel repeats this many times with varying degrees of intensity and indignation:

The so called critical philosophy made this ignorance of the eternal and the divine, into a good conscience, by claiming that we cannot know anything about the eternal and the divine. This false knowledge even dared to appropriate the name of philosophy; and nothing was more welcome for the superficial minds and characters, who have never taken up something with such eagerness as this doctrine of ignorance, which presents precisely this superficiality and emptiness for purpose and result of every intellectual striving.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the rhetoric, the thesis seems correct. Kant does not achieve a breakthrough; he does not reach the end, and this is the acknowledged result of the critical philosophy; the end cannot be reached; it is not possible to go further. The border of the visible, of the possible and intelligible, is clearly drawn; we can have cognition in this form, for this object and within this limit. Beyond it lie illusions.

Hegel repeats his charges in full awareness of their significance: in its final results Kant's philosophy leads to the ordinary standpoint and achieves the semi-clarity of 'natural' consciousness; it renders

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1. Passages of such sharpness are found everywhere. This one is from his inaugural lecture in Berlin (1818) and although parts of it might be directed at the epigones, the gist of the argument is against Kant himself. In the *Science of Logic* the criticism continues through the entire length of the exposition. See, for example, *Science of Logic*, 56–59 where Hegel speaks of a 'psychological idealism' in Kant or *Science of Logic*, 777 where the argument of the circularity of the I is called ludicrous (lächerlich).

the tension and the internal consciousness of confinement of human knowledge into conclusion, a transcendently conditioned impossibility to be otherwise. Limitation is made chronic, turned into final diagnosis. The transcendental position provides a complex language and methodology to affirm something which precedes the investigation, a conception of philosophy as an abstract discipline with a limited scope, which leads to what we could have without it: the consciousness of autonomy and of limit, and the need for the rigorous approach of a mathematised and conceptually cleansed science. Philosophy leads to morality and the exact sciences, to these other spheres of knowledge. By itself, it possesses no content beyond that of providing the foundation of the other sciences, validating their truth, and recommending them to those who would like to search for something else, 'something more'. This 'something more' is empty; in a sense it is 'less': metaphysics, inclination, dogmatism.

In the analysis that we have tried to conduct here, however, Kant provides the outlines of another position, which in a way surrounds the thesis of the critique: a conceptual frame which determines the conclusions and the content of the critique, and which continues to hold true after the deduction of the result. It is this frame that makes Kant so important for Hegel, as he was before that for Fichte and Schelling, because it determines the result—the product—of transcendental philosophy, and just as much, its principal standpoint, the beginnings of its thematisations and the very line of theorising (transcendentality).

At this point Hegel and Kant are very close, so close that all declarations of refutation and rebuff seem parts of a dialectic of essence and appearance and the merely external acts of a much deeper convergence, which cannot be fully appreciated if one does not look into the whole which they present. Hegel's arguments seem to draw a circle around the system of Kant: a circle that strengthens the contours from outside, follows and underlies them, providing a new dimension of the original project and his own enterprise. This is a new whole following the outlines of the old and moved by the same centre. The name of this centre is the idea.







## An Ending: the Absolute

We continue with a concept outside of the technical terminology of Hegel and yet directly related to the design of the *Science of Logic* as a restoration of the deeper meaning of logic: with the broad pre-Socratic concept of logos. Employing the fine methodological structure of the transcendental logic of Kant and the principal set up of Fichte, Hegel constructs a formal way towards what exceeds all concepts of form and the understanding of logos as language, reason, meaning, being, one, substance, subject-object. The objective is to deduce the human being, which means, ‘we ourselves’ and bring forward *this* self-understanding and immediacy, our own immediacy, our being. The essence ‘in and for itself’ of myself as the dimension which belongs to me, the depth and centre, which I know and around which I order everything: all this has to be brought out and shown as a whole, with nothing besides. It has to emerge as a result in its totality, not as simplicity but as a product, as something introduced, driven, derived.

The idea is to come to ourselves from outside, to come round to immediacy and thus deduce, prove simplicity; our simplicity, our naturalness, our nature.<sup>1</sup> This is a way of mediation which leads to immediacy and to the I as a product. My deepest, liveliest determination—the self as totality, energy, being, I myself in the entirety of all possible experience and action—has to appear from elsewhere, from otherness, to emerge as the result of a movement and be the end of a deduction: universal, apodictic, stronger than a mathematical formula and a sign of equation.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See J. L. Nancy, *Hegel. The Restlessness of the Negative*, trans. S. Miller and J. Smith, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

2. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 842–43.

The I—the most concrete and dynamic form, the self-appearance in and for itself, the living—is revealed as driven, as deeply dependent, as made to appear. What is dissolved is the very formula of the I and its totality; what is reached is identity (*Identität*). One of the applications of this is the thesis for the world-historical individuals presented as dependent, unconscious forms of thought and action; a simplified form of relation, a rougher and perhaps incorrect determination of subjectivity as means, not an end in itself, principal factor or cause. This relation is developed in contrast to the deeper and more substantive movement of the logic of the idea as the absolute idea, but this is a theme to which we will return later in the discussion of the conception of freedom. Now what we have here is the logical, intelligible identity, relation and unity; the individual subject is perceived as dissolved in language and universality; the singular (*Einzelne*) that we are—in the premises of syllogism, linking the particular (*Besondere*) to the universal (*Allgemeine*)

The Ego, the individual, speaks, knows itself and the world, makes statements, posits determinations, and enacts them.<sup>3</sup> It seeks, communicates, thinks. This individual thinking is a kind of positioning, a relation within an earlier, already settled consciousness in its totality. The I determines itself, has a character, expresses it, acts. For Hegel all this is the concrete, singular, and particular matter of personality with its time, individuality, character, in a society and an epoch—the stuff which we are made of—the empiricity, experience, history, our history, my history. All this is given, conditioned, already contained and determined in the concept, the universal.

I speak and state myself, I am: in the universality of language, of thought, logic. I am the singular that strives to comprehend its singularity, to define its concrete being, in its separation, and express it in universal, apodictic forms, the forms—linguistic, logical, onto-logical—of the universal.<sup>4</sup>

This is the Hegelian paradox of singularity, of uniqueness, of me myself: ‘my’ universality, ‘my’ logical nature, ‘my’ impersonality,

3. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §§ 347–48 and *Science of Logic*, 825.

4. One implication in the ethical sphere: *Philosophy of Right*, § 152: ‘In this way the ethical substantial order has attained its right, and its right its validity. That is to say, the self-will of the individual has vanished together with his private conscience which has claimed independence and opposed itself to the ethical substance. For, when his character is ethical, he recognises as the end which moves him to act the universal which is itself unmoved but is disclosed in its specific determinations as rationality actualised’.

i.e., the immersion in the common, absolute forms. The self is revealed as necessarily universal, as equal to the *universum*, only possible as universality.<sup>5</sup> This is the compulsory totality of the I, its commanding universality, the binding power of Dike, the well-bounded unity of Parmenides. In its path forward (in the method), reason comes to itself, up to the limit, which is its own essence, thus to the sublation of itself and the dissolution of the illusion for the substantiality and the solidity of the determination 'I am'.

Ego cogito. The cogito sublates the ego and removes the sense of this affirmation of itself, the expression of the will for selfhood, for me myself: a will which in its very form and in its very act, expresses totality, affirms, all at once, a *universum*, *logos*. This is the other side of the Hegelian thesis of the absolute and the traditional model of expecting the absolute as an object, as ascent, encounter, reception. Instead, there is dissolving in oneself, confluence with immediacy, with 'I myself' here and now, though in the opposite perspective, from outside; from mediation, and out of negation, with the I as negativity and relation of negativity.<sup>6</sup>

Here are a few more concrete determinations, images of the identity à la Hegel: the human being as living as consciousness, and so first and foremost as *body*, something that cannot be reduced or removed. I am a being, corpus, as infinitely complex objectivity as a conscious unity and point of reference of everything that can be given as determination of objectivity—being, externality, nature, or, matter, measure, quantity, quality, essence, causality (it is not necessary to follow the precise categorical chain of the *Logic*). The I as the movement of blood, a mechanical, chemical and electrical process, magnetism, life itself as sustenance (*genus*) and animation—birth, a generated unity of the endless levels of determination and interrelation, unity of materiality itself.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Cf. Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems*, § 23: 'Between the subject and the object no other difference is possible except the quantitative one. Because no qualitative difference is thinkable between them'. Such difference exists only in sensation (the bodily), not reason.

6. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 323.

7. See the section on Life (*die Idee des Lebens*) in *Science of Logic*. The introduction of the determination of life in transcendental philosophy is done by Fichte and all key elements of his treatment, for instance, in *Wissenschaftslehre 1807*, are to be found in Hegel: 'life is absolute syllogism, which contains its main premise in itself', it is a 'self-generating activity', thinking and life are related in the idea of absolute self-positing demonstrating itself as 'pure truth, primary source

'I am' says this. The I expresses itself: short-sighted, filled with a smarting pain here, and an itch there, this body, my body. I, who am this conscious organism, think, and therefore am. I say that I 'am' and mean 'my self', i.e., the consciousness for this quantity, quality, essence, appearance, mechanism, chemical process, teleology, life, idea, *nous*. The self-stating of the I, the consciousness for me, myself is given as identical with the circular movement of blood, the nerve system, sexual function, sensitivity and this outer, exterior determination, weight, height, complexion. The I, the essence, asserts itself, knows itself and in this way is conscious of everything that is at all, everything which is contained by it and has conditioned it. The I is the *entelechy* of being (*Sein*), essence (*Wessen*), and of the concept (*Begriff*) of objectivity in general. The object-subject—the I-object, the object that speaks—knows itself and is the objectivity which is only provisionally separated, otherwise essentially interwoven in the progressing scale of determinations, forms and levels of 'matter', 'force', 'life'.<sup>8</sup>

My body is matter, the most external, the heaviest, the matter primordial, which I am conscious of and which is conscious of itself. The I is this relation of matter to itself, which is also the relation of the generated, external, the given, to the concept of itself. It is this grasping of totality, the self-expression of the posited.<sup>9</sup> It is the concept of the over-, meta-subjective, of subjectivity as active and sustaining the very concept; the very knowing of itself, as the relating and the related to. Subjectivity is the moment of movement, the '*wieder Trieb*' of the logical;<sup>10</sup> it is the urge, the drive towards unity,

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(*Urquell*) of everything else' (*GA* II, 10, 140). Cited by G. Rametta in 'Fichte's 1807 *Wissenschaftslehre*', in *Idealistic Studies* Vol. 37, 2, Summer 2007, 121–142. The *Wissenschaftslehre* as *Gotteslehre*: it is precisely the possibility for such a connection suggested from the very beginning of Fichte's studies that is taken up with such enthusiasm in Jena by Schelling, Novalis and others.

8. The frenzy and repetitiveness of this passage is deliberate. It has to express a tautology, the identity ( $A = A$ ) of immediacy and its absolute ground—hence always of 'my' body ( $A = B$ ), 'my' self and 'the absolute' ( $A = A$ ).

9. Cf. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 46–47.

10. *Trieb*—urge, drive, in a certain sense desire, instinct—features prominently in the entire *Logic*, where every single movement from a determination to determination is said to be '*wieder Trieb*'. This *Trieb* eventually leads to the absolute Idea but then again the movement continues, not as a *Trieb* this time but as the negativity of the 'liberation' of the Idea in externality. For Hegel the urge illustrates in the very midst of the *Logic* the subjective moment of the absolute Idea. As a subject it has to decide to do that, to will it. Hence Hegel's enigmatic

towards identity, towards being with itself of the one, the primordial, of the self-negating and self-positing. The I as experiencing, sensing, feeling, connects the dimensions of the whole, completes the circle internal-external. The human being reveals itself as the internal of the external, as the coming to itself, the closing of the negation.<sup>11</sup>

The subjective is an element, figure of the movement of objectivity, of the over-subjective. This is the thesis of Spinoza for the absolute as substance; therefore Hegel struggles to affirm the opposite—idealism as humanism, logic (absolute) with a human face—acceptable, sparing, intimate:

Subjectivity is itself the absolute form and existent actuality of the substantial order, and the distinction between subject on the one hand and substance on the other, as the object, end, and controlling power of the subject, is the same as, and has vanished directly along with, the distinction between them in form.<sup>12</sup>

Is that really so? Philosophy of history speaks of instruments of action, pawns of the movement of the spirit, presented as differentiated in the identity of the human being and the spirit itself. To this, one must add Hegel's critique of Kant, the rejection of the *Sollen*, and the argument for the living, real good, which is already actual.

Yet, what happens to the human dimension, to 'our' interest? The answer has to be sought in the science of logic, in the pure thought determinations of '*die Wissenschaft nur des göttlichen Begriffs*'<sup>13</sup> and the absolute end of the exposition. Here are some of Hegel's essential determinations from that ending:

Thus the logical Idea has itself as the infinite form for its content—form which constitutes the opposite to content to this extent that the content is the form-determination withdrawn into itself and sublated in the identity in such a manner that this

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statements that the absolute thinks itself and that thinking is in itself absolute. In this context see *Science of Logic*, 758–759, 762–763, *Philosophy of Right*, § 215.

11. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 842.

12. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 152. The passage sounds exalting, but we are only in the middle of the exposition, where one deals with the transitory forms. Truth is reached at the end, with the bringing forth of the real subject behind individuality and even the state, i.e., the world-historical spirit, as the real, living form of the absolute spirit.

13. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 843.

concrete identity stands opposed to the identity explicated in form; the content has the shape of an other and a datum as against the form which as such stands simply in relation to, and its determinateness is at the same time posited as an illusionary being. More exactly, the absolute Idea itself has for its content merely this, that the form determination is its own complete totality, the pure Notion. Now the determinateness of the Idea and the entire course followed by this determinateness has constituted the subject matter of the science of logic, from which course the absolute Idea itself has issued itself into of its own; but the nature of this its existence has shown itself to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal aspect of its form—that is, the method.<sup>14</sup>

Equivocation and, perhaps, uncertainty at the very end of the logic, caused by the change of viewpoints, the reverse of perspectives, and by negation. Hence the clarity of the transition, of the movement to the interrelation with the ‘attributes’ nature and spirit. The exposition offers staying in the lucidity of the definite forms, in the clarity of the generated, concrete, the disposable. This means, staying at the stronger side of the method, of negation: in the presence of objectivity and its forms, in the process of overcoming the given modes of relation, of perceiving and revealing the absolute; thus, in relation to subjects like the proper classification of species, the methodology of sciences, magnetism, aesthetics, abstract right, labour relations, history, etc. The stress is on the elements of application of the method, on the movement of the forms and through the forms, describing them as they become and appear.

The passage is therefore to be understood here rather in this manner, that the Idea freely releases itself in its absolute self-assurance and inner poise. By reason of that freedom, the form of its determinateness is also utterly free—the externality of space and time existing absolutely on its own account without the moment of subjectivity. In so far as this externality presents itself only in the abstract immediacy of being and is apprehended from the standpoint of consciousness, it exists as mere objectivity and external life; but in the Idea it remains essential and actually the totality of the Notion, and science in the relationship to nature of divine cognition (*des göttlichen Erkennens*).<sup>15</sup>

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14. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 825.

15. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 825.

What also remains is the unspoken, hidden hesitation with regard to the conclusion, the coming to itself, and the whole—the wholeness of immediacy, of the very being, thinking, life—of negativity. There is the uncertainty of what such wholeness is in and by itself. Not the past of the movements so far, but the very here and now, the thinking of thinking, the turn and the return to itself. There is the inability to grasp it by itself, without a relation to the external and the abstract, to comprehend the return and recognise the face revealed in the moment of coming to itself.<sup>16</sup> So what one is left with is the method, the thought of return, and of *die Persönlichkeit* of the absolute.

One of Hegel's mysteries—the personality, the determination of subjectivity of the absolute idea—and the thesis of the resolve (*Entschluß*), the decision to be, to create, and enter negativity,<sup>17</sup> are only mentioned, stated, not proved, or deduced. They are followed by a swift movement away, a transition to the lost perspective of difference and otherness, for which it will then be argued that it is not other at all, but only that very negativity in relation to itself.<sup>18</sup>

This then is Hegel's 'thing in itself': this immediacy moving to itself that triggers and sublates mediation, the elusive face of the first, which is also the last, the emptiness of the moment of unity, of the living subjective identity subject-object. The exposition of this barren absolute is given with the urge to grasp and see once more the unrecognised, anonymous X of transparency, appearing at the point of closing of the circle.

But in this next resolve of the pure Idea (*Entschluß*) to determine itself as external Idea, it thereby only posits for itself the mediation out of the Notion itself, ascends as a free Existence that has withdrawn into itself from externality, that completes its self-liberation in the science of spirit, and that finds the

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16. Once again there is adjustment of the perspective, a return to the preceding dimensions and forms which have been sublated and shown as moments of the exposition until now. Here there ought to be other, new, pure determinations, of the idea in itself and for itself, not conditional projections relative to long passed standpoints.

17. The exact word is 'sich entschließt'. The idea decides (resolves) to free itself ('sich frei entlasst') in the external, and after that—to free itself from that freedom, and to become free for itself.

18. See Schelling's discussion of these points in *The Grounding of Positive Religion. The Berlin Lectures*, trans. B. Matthews, Albany: SUNY Press, 2007 and also W. Desmond, *Hegel's God. A Counterfeit Double?*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.



supreme Notion of itself in the science of logic as the self-comprehending pure Notion.<sup>19</sup>

In the moment of unity the logic reproduces the other, a moment of the movement, repetition: existence, the logically simple determination of appearance (*Erscheinung*), of the philosophy of nature, of the external. There is clarity of the movement, murkiness of the moving. We have contact with hidden inactuality of the absolute, which directly means inactuality of the human being: the most inward, most complex, i.e., subjectivity, I here and now, the living, bodily, concrete individual, in time and space with images of itself. This presence is movement, negation, openness. It manifests life not as an object but as drive, impulse, longing, as will and action of the perfect microcosm of the human body, active here and now. This manifested, concrete—having a name, personality, individual history and existence I—now stands before itself as manifesting a totality, a negation and an identity, which is still not brought out, still not sublated, and is undeveloped, latent in itself. The singular is given in unity with the universal, which is undeveloped, unset in appearance, unthought. Thus the human being, the I itself, is inactual, latent, for itself.

This is unexpected: Kant has emerged at the end as a result, and a consequence, his practical subject—as the active, willing agent. What a turn: the *Wissenschaft der Logik* to lead to this, to *have* to lead to this: to the noumenon, the old ‘ought’ and the *Sollen*. This is a return: from the logic and the question ‘Was?’ through the ‘Tun!’ of Fichte to the most concrete, richest, liveliest determination, ‘*die höchste Spitze*’ of subjectivity, my subjectivity, with the infinite relativity of singularity, and the conditionality of the absolute as me in relation to myself: ‘*Was soll ich tun?*’

This is the deepest equivocation, the ultimate moment of the absolute idea brought to the surface and the immediacy of the I. It contains the hesitation with regard to oneself, the uncertainty given in its proper dialectical form (the interrogative), and, the lucidity and resolution of the response, universal and apodictic as the science of logic: the practice of pure reason.

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19. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 844. With the exception of the odd-sounding expression ‘the Idea resolves’ it is hard to judge what of the clear and distinct content here does not belong to Fichte.





# Actuality

We have reached the final stage and the issue of the real stakes of the system. The prototype here is Spinoza, the much disputed *Gott vertunkene Mann*, the philosopher of the absolute substance and the utter unity of everything, who ends with the thesis of freedom—true freedom—which comes with knowledge of the third kind surpassing sensitivity and intellect: ‘Whatsoever we understand by the third kind of knowledge, we take delight in, and our delight is accompanied by the idea of God as cause’. And further, the unimaginable: ‘The human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God’.<sup>1</sup>

The free man is the man knowing, seeing God. Knowledge is freedom; knowledge of the presence of God, of our presence in God; this itself is freedom, joy, love. All of this as philosophical theses is combined with a painful existence in isolation, severing the ties with the community and with solitude, which despite fame, remained with him to the end, visible in the letters showing the burden of carrying this solitary knowledge and having it shared and understood. Something like this, albeit in a weaker form, occurred later with Kant, and, more visibly, Fichte, where precisely the treatment of religion and the inward, deeper meaning of faith caused friction, rejection, rebuff. What was defended against them is the external form, the outer framework of mind, the objectivity (visibility) of religion, in other words, the form of religion as ‘objective spirit’, not as intimate subjective experience and knowing. And, yet, this is precisely the matter under consideration, the dimension that has to be related to the aspect of objectivity, and the settled, familiar

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1. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book V, Prop. 32 and Book II, Prop. 47.

form. The question is about this relation between religion as positive, given, and religion as experienced, lived, always renewed and re-positing now. The thesis of rationalism—religion within the limits of reason alone—can potentially bare an element of an intimate, essential relation, a moment of the universal deduction of individual consciousness. Instead of its elucidation, there is conflict, or rather, deflection of the theses.

Why does religion become important for philosophy, a source of problems with society the moment it raises the subject, given that the systems, in the framework of which this is being done, were otherwise largely ignored?<sup>2</sup> Religion appears as a special test, a measurement against which philosophical systems are judged acceptable or not, a territory on which they are publicly registered, finally taken notice of. And all this sudden interest despite the difficulty of comprehension of the theories and the true standing on religion of Kant, Fichte or Hegel, so that often what is reacted against is a sketch of the system, a vague notion of the substance of their claims.

For philosophy, and in this case for Hegel, religion returns as a theme of major importance especially at the end, when the system was constructed and religion—its history and contents—remained the field where there could be something from the essential material of metaphysics, the science determining the absolute, the Spirit. This is a sphere of phenomenological interest where there, still, can be found a remainder not duly studied, some presence, which could fill in the logical formulae, feed the concept and the determinations given in their 'pure form'. To be sure, religion was of special interest for Hegel from the very beginning, a key element of the critique which marked the emergence of his concern with methodology and systematicity. Nevertheless, when the totality of the logic was given and the conceptual path was followed to its end, the very deduction of the idea required transition and delving into the real, present content of the concept of religion. It was the source of the dynamics in the lectures on the philosophy of religion and the preoccupation with Hinduism, elements of which began to appear in the later courses on the topic and the subsequent editions of the *Encyclopaedia* and other texts.

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2. Kant had to give explanations after *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Fichte came to open confrontation on the same subject, which led to his dismissal from Jena and his move to Prussia, where few years later Hegel had to enter debates about the right to develop a philosophy of religion and a conception of Christianity from a speculative point of view.

Yet, important here is something else: and it is this preoccupation, this interest which stands in a special relation to the beginnings of philosophy and the disciplines to which it initially looks up with hope (mathematics and the exact sciences). In its final position in relation to them, philosophy comes to religion as to a key element of its self-determination and, in a certain sense, of its emancipation. Here the nuances matter. In Kant we have continuation of the critical approach, the firm resolve to deduce the concept of religion and grasp the essential, positive content of its concept. This is an approach of deduction, which is, simultaneously, reduction of the concept to its real content, irrespective of what it means for representation (*Vorstellung*) and the other constructs of consciousness. It resembles forcing one to recognise the rational, pressure to relinquish the ambiguous but comfortable—comforting—aspect of our representations and half-elucidated relations of feeling which seems to contain more. In Fichte this is announced with characteristic force, without qualifications; the reduction which is more or less implicit in Kant is brought forward as a clear-cut formula.<sup>3</sup> It is followed by a reversal, which we see later in Schelling and which in a particular manner transforms the status of the theses and the philosophical systems under consideration.

The theme is perhaps most interesting in Hegel because it stands at the very heart of the system and affects the logic and the unacknowledged difficulty of accounting for what really occurs there, in the circumstances of absolute knowledge. Hegel seeks understanding of that absolute, comprehension of the deduction of the absolute idea in religion, because it may, despite everything being said and done, hold in an apparent, self-positing manner the key to the relation which determines the absolute idea itself: the unity and living identity human being—God, the sublation of that difference, the disappearance of the form and of the formal in general, and the emergence of the concept as the knowledge for itself. This is the thinking of oneself, the absolute moment of consciousness as self-consciousness, in which selfhood—the essence of this ‘me myself’, I or reason—loses its validity and moves in another form of relatedness. It becomes condition conditioning consciousness into consciousness into consciousness, as in causal progression of truth, where reflective consciousness can conceive every concrete, disparate object as something become (*entwikel*) and as becoming (*Entwicklung*).

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3. God is only the intelligible order that we create with our actions.

In Hegel, as it is made clear, there is more of the dynamics of Fichte principally because he comes to it at the end, in the moment of transition through all forms and contents. Reflection is held by the consideration of objectivity and the material world and does not additionally have to relate to them. This is the great achievement of Schelling: the possibility to open the path of Spinoza, restore the essence of his philosophy and construct the objective form of the absolute as absolute, demonstrated in the ability to remove the difference: the dimensions of simple intuition (visibility), the simple border and the limit. Identity gives the ability to operate with this limit; it is the movement of the boundary, which by itself is constitutive of the identity at every level, step, potency.

The arguments of Aristotle, the dynamics of thought-determinations, the interrelation of the categories, give Hegel the advantage of showing this identity in a more polished, sustained logical form and presenting the concept of the whole, of the very absolute, in a single movement through the forms, which it engenders and overcomes. The substance is set into motion; it acts and determines itself.<sup>4</sup> This, like the element of construction (*Konstruktion*), gives the essence of the very determination, of the *Potenz*, the genesis of the forms of being and thought. This is dialectics, which later becomes over-formalised in the narrowing of philosophical vision after Hegel. For him it possesses an element of plasticity of the consciousness of the absolute, a moment of necessity and totality of self-positing of the beginning of the idea, which unfolds itself in a process of becoming itself. This process cannot be seen except as a movement of negation—through the forms of the phenomenal, the immediate, in the dynamics of constant appearance. Its internal form is derived out of something else; it becomes other in the

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4. 'Accordingly, what is to be considered here as method is only the movement of the Notion itself, the nature of which movement has already been cognised; but first, there is now the added significance that the Notion is everything, and its movement is the universal absolute activity, the self-determination and self-realising movement . . . but according to the universality of the Idea, it is both the manner peculiar to cognition, to the subjectively self-knowing Notion, and also the objective manner, or rather the substantiality of things—that is, of Notions, in so far as they appear primary to representation and reflection as others. It is therefore not only the highest force, or rather the sole and absolute force of reason, but also its supreme and sole urge (*Trieb*) to find and cognize itself by means of itself in everything. Here, secondly, is indicated the difference of the method from the Notion as such, the particular aspect of the method' (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 826).

deepening of itself, which is also the coming and becoming of unity. The substance as subject, and as sublation.

Still, Hegel is beset by the same problem which he ascribes to Schelling and believes he has overcome as a matter of effort and method, not of limitation present in the very essence of the conception of a transcendental philosophy of post-Kantian type: the grey-ness and one-dimensionality of the conceived, the speculative night in which all cows are black. As we have seen earlier, of all chapters, detailed and broad in the unfinished second edition of the *Science of Logic*, one of the shortest and most disconcerting in its directions is that of the absolute idea.<sup>5</sup> It has the character of transition, given as the link between the phases of the already accomplished movement; an explanation of the necessity to think of it all as one, followed by the assembling of a few determinations which have already been used—method, negation, dialectic—and passage to the next subdivision of the system. The owl of Minerva does not see forms and essences, only contours, in flight.

It is for this reason that Hegel turns with such vehemence to the fullness of human knowledge and the life of the human spirit: philosophy of religion, history, science, aesthetics. The pure has to receive measure and content appropriate to the concept which is revealed—the formula which is often repeated, Aristotle's *noesis noeseōs*.<sup>6</sup> The *noūs* as subject appears as sustaining the unity, as the unifying ground, but the moment of subjectivity, of personality appears more attributed than deduced.<sup>7</sup> How is the absolute a personality, individuality in relation to what and in relation to whom?

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5. A remark in the spirit of Kierkegaard: 'the Method' yields 150 pages on quantum, 6 on the good, 24 on the absolute idea.

6. On the influence of Aristotle and specifically on this aspect of the *Science of Logic* see K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1984, 305–13.

7. *Persönlichkeit*—Hegel speaks about that in two passages in the section on the absolute Idea in *Science of Logic*, 824, 841. Two perspectives merge here: a) transcendental, with the conception of the I coming from Fichte, and b) religious-philosophical, with the thesis of Christianity as religion of revelation, disclosing the inner principle of personality of the absolute. The logic has to reflect the truth of that revelation and at the same time to give its pure content, the Concept, without the moment of 'sentiment and representation' which Hegel associates with religion. This is done in the cited sections on the concrete, subjective identity, with the moment of negativity in relation to itself and freedom. When, however, he has to extend the identification of the two moments with regard to his own determinations, the thread wares thin.



What becomes of the human personality, where are the dialectical dimensions here, the relevant steps of negation?

A second paradox: Hegel who attacks Kant for the negativity of the result and the restrictions which he imposes as demarcation zones of possible operation of reason, has himself to speak so much of negativity and use the formula of negation as the most essential element of the highest knowledge:<sup>8</sup>

Now the negativity just considered constitutes the turning point of the movement of the Notion. It is the simple point of the negative relation to self, the innermost source of all activity, of all intimate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true; for on this subjectivity alone rests the sublating of the opposition between Notion and reality, and the unity that is truth.—The second negative, the negative of the negative, at which we have arrived, is this sublating of the contradiction, but just as little as the contradiction is it an act of external reflection, but rather the innermost, most objective movement of life and spirit, through which a subject, a person, a free being, exists.<sup>9</sup>

Dazzling, blurring of vision, restraint in saying everything: what is it that we witness here? In this dimension of purity there has always been equivocation, tension, ambiguity; left Hegelians, right Hegelians, Marx and all possible applications of the method, uses of dialectics. Things have always seemed easier elsewhere: in history, economics, law, natural sciences, etc. There insecurity is suspended and what remains is the clarity of the internal construction, the ability to think of the possibility of control, of action on a different scale: a grounding dialectical action.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, what stands at the centre of the issues addressed by Hegel remains unaffected. It is the sphere of morals, freedom, responsibility, i.e., Kant. As Desmond suggests, the left Hegelians appear to be right.<sup>11</sup> Hegel *almost* says what they want: rational (absolute) action

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8. Negativity (*Negativität*) as mediation, contradiction, sublation (*Aufhebung*) still continues to have its own determination of negation. It needs a 'in itself', to go through it.

9. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 835–836.

10. See Desmond, *Hegel's God*, 73–92.

11. See Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, 142–55, 179, 338. See also D. Losurdo, *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns*, trans. M. and J. Morris, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004.

and positing of actuality is possible and necessary.<sup>12</sup> There is no other subject of action except for the (human) spirit: subjective, national, world-historical. Spirit is by nature dialectical, charged with negativity, which means, charged with movement and drive; this is how one should understand too one's own discontent and impulses of rejection. Further, there are no longer the barriers of the Kantian autonomy, his limitations of the possible, the restrictions of the *Sollen* as pure form of freedom and morality, and an unquestionable zone of truthfulness, beyond which there is mixture of the motives with impulses, with the human matter of representations and actions.

For Hegel 'the ought' is an empty form.<sup>13</sup> The very formula of the moral law is an abstraction, an element of positing which sublates it, a kind of purity which does not mean much. The mole—a strange image when applied to the spirit—moves, digs, to emerge in the light through the forms of negation.<sup>14</sup> What is concrete and determinate cannot be rejected and kept at a distance as if it were something alien and dangerous. One cannot stand apart, in opposition, and in collision—in a reversed clash of the practical, *Anstoß*—in order to bring forward and sustain freedom. Rationality is an objective form, being, posited in an end. The ought, if released, posits actuality, good, freedom as objective, empirical, social. The rational sets itself in sentiment, ethnicity, in the human world as a world of immediate interests, profession, family, incomes, etc.<sup>15</sup> The spirit has to see itself as posited, as living good, as idea (ethical idea). This means that the idea is capable of positing itself in the forms which

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12. The deliberate abstraction and indeterminacy of Hegel leaves the consequences of the speculative thesis to hover around the principle, suggesting concretisations, which resembles the relativity of the postulates of the practical metaphysics of Kant as if (*als ob*).

13. 'Duty itself in the moral self-consciousness is the essence or the universality of that consciousness, the way in which it is inwardly related to itself alone; all that is left to it, therefore, is abstract universality, and for its determinate character it has identity without content, or the abstract positive, the indeterminate'. Further on in the addition it is said: 'From this point of view, no immanent doctrine of duties is possible' (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 134).

14. Hegel, *Vorlesungen der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 605, 611.

15. 'Ethical life is the Idea of freedom in that on the one hand it is the good become alive—the good endowed in self-consciousness with knowing and willing and actualised by self-conscious action—while on the other hand self-consciousness has in the ethical realm its absolute foundation and the end which actuates its effort. Thus ethical life is the concept of freedom developed into the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness' (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 142).

it has passed on the way to its own self-knowing—to posit life, to be life, teleology, chemism, mechanism, etc., back through the steps of the *Logic*.

The good is not limited to moral reflection and abstract expositions, residing within the limits of individual judgement, as a matter of restriction, a positing in pure reason and a pure following of the law. The inner law, as a higher form, is brought out and becomes right (*Recht*), society, ethical order (*Sittlichkeit*), known, learned, followed. Freedom is true as institutions, right, constitution, in the rational arrangement—rational essence—of human life.<sup>16</sup> The ought, precisely because it is an obligation, leads to the necessity and the universality of the result, of the good, of freedom. This is the source of the argument for the necessity of history and the notion of the philosophy of history as illustration, as proof. We inhabit a world posited by the ought, the categorical imperative, the good. The spirit has passed through this form; it uses it in order to realise itself as intelligible, but also, as sensible order, as kingdom on earth, as kingdom, as state.

Hence, the ending of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* follows closely the logic with the moments of unity of self-consciousness of freedom, the good, and the reality of the spirit itself. It repeats also the thought that the differentiation of theoretical and practical reason is secondary, reflective, that at their dual basis stands the idea which is already practical and already theoretical, and which reveals actuality as rational.<sup>17</sup> So there is identity again, a moment of freedom and unity in, with itself; the identity as dynamism, as an act of cognition, as experience.

Yet, despite all this, Kant's main points are left standing. His theses persist and cannot be absorbed by speculation. The question for the demarcation and inherent limitation, for the challenged right of absolute philosophical pretences, surfaces again at the moment one breaks from the circling transitions of the system: circle of circles, spheres of consolidation, which point elsewhere, forward or

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16. See L. Heyde, *De verwerkelijking van de vrijheid*, Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1987, J. Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982.

17. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 824. See K. H. Ilting, 'Rechtsphilosophie als Phänomenologie des Bewußtseins der Freiheit', in *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik. Formation und Rekonstruktion*, Hrsg. D. Henrich, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986, 225–254.

back, becoming, supporting themselves.<sup>18</sup> The rotating movement inside the concept and within thought as self-development, does not remove the moment with which Kant begins and with which he end: Still, for all speculative claims and expositions, what does it mean to be ourselves, to be what we are, now? The question of the ought, of our *Können, Sollen, Dürfen*.

This 'Kantian question' is not sublated, neither in the logic, nor in the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit, because the response which is given there cannot be a real response. This became evident in the popularity of Gans with his lectures on Hegel's own *Philosophy of Right*<sup>19</sup>, popularity due to additions and hints at implications of the principles, suggesting what they 'ought' to mean. Ought . . . The concrete ethical response of Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* does not have much in common with the grand outlines suggested by the logic and the other parts of the system. 'Do what is expected of you to do, what has already been settled and said'. 'Your obligations are objective, clear and distinct: to follow the actual, i.e., the rational'.

In an ethical community, it is easy to say what man must do, what are the duties he has to fulfil in order to be virtuous: he has simply to follow the well-known and explicit rules of his own situation. Rectitude is the general character which may be demanded of him by law or custom. But from the standpoint of morality, rectitude often seems to be something comparatively inferior, something beyond which still higher demands must be made on oneself and others, because the craving to be something special is not satisfied with what is absolute and universal; it finds consciousness of peculiarity only in what is exceptional.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 842

19. As Pinkard writes, in his last years Hegel entrusted part of his lectures on *Philosophy of Right* to Gans who began to attract large audiences. Still, for all his abstraction and restraint, Hegel exerted enough influence to cause concern at the Prussian court. See T. Pinkard, *Hegel. A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 and W. Jaeschke, 'Hegel's Last Year in Berlin', in *Hegel's Philosophy of Action*, L. Stepelevich and D. Lamb (eds.), Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1983.

20. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 150. Moral individuality is considered as going into pretentiousness and self-importance. In a similar way is considered the matter of conscience which despite its sacred right could not stand up to the substantial: 'the state cannot give recognition to conscience in its private form as subjective knowing' (§ 137 Add.). In this Hegel follows Kant and Fichte—'personality is only a special way to express reason' (Fichte, *An Attempt at a New Presentation*,

Acceptance, pacification; the rest is empty, baseless negativity. Freedom is the concrete, engaged consciousness, the courage to be ethical, to adopt the conventions and shapes of the real world, to take responsibility for yourself and others, and assume the dimensions of actuality: family, labour, social status, guild (corporation), state.<sup>21</sup> It is the ability to recognise the ethical and see the freedom inside these forms, because the alternative is negation of the good—of the spirit—in the name of abstractions, of momentary impressions of an incomplete, developing consciousness, which is bound to mature and in the process sublate everything: the notions it accepts as ideal and those it rejects as merely ‘real’. So for Hegel re-conciliation with the concrete is understanding of the concrete, one’s settling into it.

In its political formulation this could qualify as conservatism, the ideology of order and of preservation of what is in existence.<sup>22</sup> The movement ahead will have to pass through destruction, but the destruction of what? What does an ethics of the good mean? What kind of ideal is that which goes through the destruction of the ethical, the annihilation of a world?

It is from here that Hegel introduces the world-historical individuals as unconscious engines of change, who go through negation as through mist, and who either do not understand or are able to ignore the actuality of what it really means to act and force a change in the fabrics of objectivity, i.e., of the spirit. Napoleon overruns Europe in the name of freedom and the glory of France, bleeding her to death and leaving her in its initial borders. The dimensions of

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63)—but without the perspective of infinite striving. Thus conscience has to hold the universal but is equated with the common, the public. Here it is hard to agree with Hegel. Such a thesis cannot be immune to dialectics; collective consciousness is no more secure in its truth than the individual.

21. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §§ 28–30.

22. This is only an aspect. Hegel’s thinking goes beyond the simpler political differentiations. His commitment to freedom as rationality and right is unconditional and this would make him a liberal. In the years after the publication of *Philosophy of Right*, however, his views on a political constitution had begun to appear increasingly out of touch with the times, reflections of the ideals of a bygone era. Hence, the confusing perception of rejection of the new, and at the same time, its ultimate affirmation through the principle of freedom. See M. Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, and K. H. Ilting, ‘The Structure of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right’, *Hegel’s Political Philosophy. Problems and Perspectives*, Z. A. Pelczynski (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

greatness are dimensions of negativity, which is the source of a new birth and awakening.

Here one could leave aside the question about the concrete political context of *Philosophy of Right*, the threat to his professorial status, the fear of loss of prestige and sharing the fate of Fichte. In a peculiar way, Hegel succeeds in speaking about politics outside the political, without touching on its real, practical dimensions. The question of freedom in this presentation is solved on another level, in a context which cannot be controlled by the immediacy of the moment. Hegel accounts for the political order of the day for what it is: a set of forms (formations) of realised practical reason, actual freedom as consciousness and will, as spirit. His demonstration of the constitutive essence of the concept of freedom takes away the element of power which they possess for the individuals; they could be unfolded and sublated, brought in a different direction by the dynamics of consciousness. The political forms as natural forms: the internal law of freedom, the essence of the spirit, will express itself through them and define them from inside, in the very consciousness of the individual rationality itself, independent of the positions of power accepted as rational and real now.<sup>128</sup>

The charge which has always been directed against Hegel, and must be so directed, is that in this way one could accept everything, justify everything. The ought is not woken up because reflection itself sublates it; understanding consumes it all. Hegelian values: *Versöhnung*, reconciliation, acceptance, understanding, freedom. The freedom to accept and to acquiesce.

And yet all this cannot remove the personal position, the necessity of choice, of self-determination, of autonomy. Dialectics requires the preservation of difference, the singularity of the determination of the will, i.e., the most concrete and lively foundation of the entire process.<sup>23</sup> Here everything is one, truthful, active. I am, I wish, I ought—to be. Freedom remains at the foreground in the dimensions of the individual, personal consciousness: responsibility, autonomy, the form of self-determination.

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23. 'The enrichment proceeds in the necessity of the Notion, it is held by it, and each determination is a reflection-into-itself. Each new stage of forth-going (*Außersichgehens*), that is, of further determination, is also a withdrawal inwards, and the greater extension is equally a higher intensity. The richest is therefore the most concrete and most subjective, and that which withdraws itself into the simplest depth is the mightiest and most all-embracing' (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 840–41).

For Hegel to reject Kant in consequence of his own final result—acceptance—would mean rejection and sublation of the very dialectical, logical element. What is deduced is the concrete living consciousness and its *time*: the present, individual ought, freedom as imperative and (individual, existential) responsibility. Therefore the recipe for re-conciliation with the current model—something that later will be described as the phenomenon of the masses—could only be perceived as a conditional formula, preceding the emergence of real understanding, of philosophy. By itself it is worthless.

Hegelian enigmas: dialectics as limitation, an absolute which does not lead to engagement; nothing beyond the ordinary and accessible prior to the summit: legality, order, security. All this objectivisation of freedom leads to the shrinking of the perimeter around the human being, of the very measure of man. The consciousness of infinity, affirmed by Kant and manifested in Fichte, is reduced logically to the thesis of unity, the dominance of the present, of the rationality of the logical categories, which in reversed order display one another: the idea behind objectivity, behind actuality, behind determined being (*Dasein*).

There is something ‘ludicrous’<sup>24</sup> about this: an ordinary absolute, a speculative deduction of habit, as empty as the substantiation of immediate revolutionary change or a programme of total upheaval, of ‘absolute action’.<sup>25</sup> This is a structural problem, which in a certain way is implanted in the project since its inception and is a consequence out of it, an imbalance or deflection, emerging regularly at certain places of the system. One such moment is the equivocal treatment of the concept of the good, the narrowing of ‘the good itself’ to the technology of action—end, means, realisation—and the unity of the practical and theoretical reason; a simple recount of the factology of acting, not of its essence in the concept of the good, which stands on both sides of the divide internal-external, subjective-objective.

Hegel shows the movement, the transition, but not the subject of movement itself. The most important is missing. This idea of the good, what is it? How is it constituted in the logical process?

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24. Hegel’s own term reserved for Kant’s anti-dialectical arguments, and itself a version of Socratic *gelōios* of Plato’s dialogues. See note 78.

25. This is part of the rhetoric of revolutionaries of the Marxist and Leninist type. See *The Communist Manifesto* with the peculiar but telling imagery of this type of thinking in the ghost (*Gespent*) stalking around Europe. Not spirit, ghost.

What are its proper dimensions? The questions concern the good itself, that which becomes concrete in the identification of ends and means; it challenges the conceptual structure of the concept of universal, particular, singular. All this remains empty; the logical deduction of the good in Hegel does not succeed in providing anything more than its various aspects.<sup>26</sup>

There are elements of references, of description and use, not of deduction and immanence. Further on, the determination (self-determination) of the absolute idea does not lead to much more than the statements of the sublation of the good in the concept of freedom as essence, destiny and drive (*Trieb*), i.e., as the power of the spirit to be itself, to be free.

And so there is resolve (*Entschluß*), personality (*Personalität*) and freedom, but no real determination to precede and supersede this concept, this aspect of the idea. 'It is intelligible', that is, we have the technology of realisation of ends, of appearance, of thinking, ergo, we know the good. The result is that when the good emerges as a topic again in *Philosophy of Right*, there is once again only a repetition of the theses of the logic: sublation of the ought as one-sided, the argument for morality as moment of the full determination of the ethical, the stress on the living good (*das lebendige Gute*).<sup>27</sup> These are all allusions to the concept of the good, descriptions of its forms, without giving the full-fledged determination of the universal and singular idea of the good. For that reason when the exposition reaches the issue of the ethical as individuality, not simply as an object of description, but as a subject—the proper dimension of the absolute as concrete, universal consciousness, which knows itself as ethical, committed, responsible—Hegel could bring nothing more than this: Follow the familiar. Continue the given, posited, grounded. Submit. Obey.

The entire movement of the logic does not lead to anything when it crosses into the space of the practical; it brings no principles,

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26. See the section on the practical idea in the *Science of Logic*. There is more in *Philosophy of Right*, but the emphasis there is again on the clarifications of the aspects of will and action: 'The good is the Idea as the unity of the concept of the will with the particular will. In this unity, abstract right, welfare, the subjectivity of the knowing and the contingency of external fact, have their independent self-subsistence superseded, though at the same time they are still contained and retained within it in their essence. The good is thus freedom realised, the absolute end and aim of the world' (§129). See §§ 4–29, 130–33.

27. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 142.



no revelation. Instead it reduces the present and limits the already deduced: the consciousness of responsibility, openness, infinity. But without this, without the striving and the consciousness of the rationality within us, the human being is nothing, a continuation and not so 'world-historical' means for the transit of self-objectivising contents.

Further, it is precisely the ought-principle of Kant that has in itself the element of negativity, of the infinite relation to oneself, the moment of return, decision (*Entschluß*) and of transition that Hegel wants. The constitutiveness of consciousness, of the rational as idea, is led by the element of universality, of freedom as autonomy, self-sufficiency in relation to the concrete determinations, to the present.

In a sense, this is the dimension of wholeness, the dimension with which begins Hegel himself: the dimension of *Trieb*, of the movement of self-determination, the developing of the concept, the consciousness for action, openness, being; the emptiest and the richest, the primary and the final. And if Hegel was the one to make history into such an important part of philosophy, demonstrating its ability to go through the most painful, intimate and heaviest of matters—the human, not possible but actual experience, the factology of practical action, i.e., history—it is precisely here that the indeterminacy, and equivocation at the key steps of the system shows itself most clearly. With Hegel one can justify anything: big truths, small truths, social utopias, anti-utopias. Yet, it seems, we could not be what is required of us, what, with Kant, we require of ourselves: to be rational beings, responsible for ourselves, adequate to the measure which we carry in ourselves—universality, that is, freedom.





## Conclusion

How does a philosophy end? The feeling can be compared to one's sinking in the space around, to the loss of vigour, or to the unconscious lingering on a certain thesis or point. The clear, driving ahead as a beam dimension of clarity disappears, and the momentary—the movement, the transition which we have almost not felt so far—settles in as reality. We awake to the awareness of where we are, what we have done, what we do. The articulation of the vision ahead is replaced by the consciousness of the place we have reached. The aim is lost and is transformed into something imaginary: a scheme without the power to draw us to itself, serving only as a projection of a conclusion, of an end. The absolute, the final, becomes a trace, a memory, in contrast to the present, the movement here and now, the moment of awakening, of recollection. Suddenly one is overwhelmed by the enormity of the distance, the intensity of the movement and the barriers that have been overcome. Perhaps this is enough? Perhaps this is the whole? At least, a whole of a kind as a minimum one that transcends the philosophies of the past, a circle thrown beyond the existing boundaries of thought?

This is a possible description of the end of a philosophy, the severing of the lines that guide it forward and its turning into a conceptual system, imbued with its, perhaps premature, completion. But the observed movement has an additional significance. As it has already been mentioned by so many commentators, the philosophy of German idealism contains a frantic, titanic side that ties down our mind to this epoch and these authors, even if we are capable of clarity only of certain aspects of their thinking, a line of their whole. We know of the totality; we do not really reach it, yet even that—the elucidated fragment and theme—seems more than what many

current theories could offer, more than what we believe we could produce ourselves. And here the focus is not so much on the great figures which we present here, as on the specific 'German moment' of about thirty years following the publication of the *Critique of the Pure Reason* in which there is a certain breakthrough, an opening in the surface of the conceivable, of thought, which draws consciousness like a magnet to what shines through there: the impossible light of the spirit, which has, suddenly, become accessible. This is the reason why it is possible to speak, as has always been done, of one period and one movement of thought, which is shared by many, taken up in different ways, transferred as a living experience and perhaps as a secret; until the opening is closed, and the striving to explore it becomes diluted by the efforts of repetition and the attractions discovered in a different direction, luring the mind with its novelty and promise.

Perhaps the image of a breakthrough, of a metaphysical entry into the unconditional, is too dramatic. Yet, at its core the entire philosophy of transcendental idealism, even the critical trilogy of Kant, is charged with an energy which cannot pass unnoticed. The tender and more poetic souls do not survive the frenzy of seeking. Hölderlin, Schelling, Novalis all go very far; for Hölderlin this means too far, in a level of consciousness which loses almost all relation with ours. Something similar in terms of drama, albeit with an opposite charge, happens with Schelling too, with the gradual weakening of the incredible power and freedom of his thought. Slowly, the range of free movement diminishes, as it has happened earlier with Fichte. And the entire personal effort, the will for life and truth, has gone into mastering the enormous material of the natural sciences and the construction of their relation to transcendental philosophy: in the drive ahead, the impetus to reach further and further in the open infinity of consciousness. Schelling goes deep into an ecstasis of thought which moves in abstraction as in its own matter, in an excitement without which one cannot understand the formalism and precision of the construction of the systems, the sheer audacity of the idea of 'an entire science of knowledge' or an 'encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences'.

For us, the finished form of the epoch is represented by Hegel, and in this sense it might, at first, appear strange that Hegel considered himself a successor of a philosophical enterprise that had been started by others. At the times when Hegel truly went to the

foreground, most of the brilliant personalities of the inner circle in Jena were dead, mad, or drawn in the effort to go beyond the repetition of their earlier accomplishments. In this sense, the lack of enthusiasm of Goethe for Hegel's work is, at least partly, due to the feeling that the moment had passed and what remained was the work of systematisation and recounting of what had been.<sup>1</sup> The glorious light of the breakthrough is receding, and its possibilities are coming to a close. A moment of this consciousness of completion, this '*Aber Freund! Wir kommen zu spät*' of Hölderlin, is present also in Hegel, brought to the surface in the design of his *Philosophy of Right*, and the detailed descriptions of forms, which now ought to be accepted, in recognition of the rights of actuality.

The movement of thought becomes history, a series of biographies and events, and this opening of the knowledge of the absolute—the opening into the tight fabric of experience—becomes a moment of the production of the final system of transcendental idealism: the most thorough, ambitious and conscious of itself. Between the discovery of the transcendental validity of the concept of freedom, the deduction of the radical new understanding of the practical—‘everything that is possible through freedom’ of Kant—and the concrete, almost pedantic analysis of freedom as legal order in the *Philosophy of Right* lies the consciousness of the embodied, lived freedom, i.e., the consciousness of the reality of the practical, and of the other, phenomenal side of this experienced, posited freedom.

The discovered is so much and the beginning is so powerful that the accomplished seems small in comparison. And perhaps this is the reason for Hegel's schematism with respect to individual freedom. It is expressed in various ways: from the conception of the unconscious automatism of world-historical individuals or the confined, minimalist analysis of the concept of practical action in the logic to the uncompromising lowering of expectations in the philosophy of right. Both Kant and Fichte speak of intelligible order, a duality of the essence of man, and offer a real, actual cosmopolitanism and universalism of personality, guaranteed by transcendental philosophy. Hegel goes beyond duality and the promise of the absolute. He cannot disregard the implications of the attempts for application of pure practical reason. Therefore he brings to the foreground

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1. See their brief correspondence—exalted and reverential with Hegel and indifferent with Goethe, in *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

the necessary layers in the constitution of the concept of freedom as real, layers that fill it in, and make it tangible, concrete. Step by step the *Philosophy of Right* presents the levels of constitution of that concept beyond the idealised perspective of the dual meaning of our acts, the reassuring presence of light behind the shadow and the infinite possibility of a conceivable intelligible kingdom.

Every kingdom for Hegel is (also) intelligible; every real action is practical. And it is precisely the realisation of the necessary earthly weight of every real understanding of freedom—in history we go through three phases of consciousness of this freedom—that is contained in the sobering judgement of Hegel: freedom is a property of the absolute spirit; it is its own inner quality and so the world that we think we can build in a pure dimension is an imaginary world. True freedom—and logically this means the explicated concept of freedom in general—is freedom as right, as ethical constitution, with forms of social organisation, institutions and laws. This is the reality of freedom; this is what we could have and what can be achieved.<sup>2</sup> Demand rights, laws and a nation state, or your freedom will remain a flicker of a dream, which cannot be sustained for long, a dream which belongs to its time and is bound to disappear with it.

#### I.

In many respects the insights of Hegel are the fruits of completion, the accomplishments of a witness, left to recount and tell, when everything appears to have been gone. In essence, these insights could be brought down to the observation that the entrance to absolute knowledge, however exciting, in fact does not mean much in a direct practical sense; that the very experience of freedom in knowledge and of knowledge in freedom have not been transformed into a blueprint of action in the world. Knowledge does not give rights over reality; it does not provide access to a special type of causality, which could be practiced by the few. Absolute knowledge is not and cannot be practical. And in effect, the main emphasis of *Wissenschaft der Logik* does not fall upon absolute knowledge, but upon the absolute idea. It, and not subjectivity set in practical context, is truly active. In the sphere of objective spirit, what corresponds to it is the world-historical spirit, the only subject of actuality.

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2. See K. H. Ilting, 'Rechtsphilosophie als Phänomenologie des Bewußtseins der Freiheit', in *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik. Formation und Rekonstruktion*, D. Henrich (ed.), 225–254.

This is the problem of the philosophy of German idealism: the consciousness reaching every one of its figures of the constraints of the enterprise, of its closure within certain limits which appeared to have been lifted in the totality of the achieved, of the absolute idea. This totality could be contemplated and thought, but not altered. Change depends on it alone, on the principle which generates and sustains it. Philosophy could explain this principle and bear witness to its processes, but not make use of it.

Transcendental philosophy, the philosophy of idealism as a whole, is not an applied science. And if there is something that distinguishes the beginning of the entire movement with the restrained and clear voice of freedom in Kant from its peak, it is the consciousness of constraint, the recognition of a limit, and its acceptance. The *Science of Logic* assumes the form of bringing down to earth and securing the energies released in the purity of speculative thought. It is *Versöhnung* of the absolute with the concrete, the road back, down, to the starting point, which is also the final point. 'A system is complete when it returns to its point of beginning'.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning is the lack of knowledge, the drive, the longing and the striving, the human form turning towards its inner, grounding ultimacy. It remains at the end, seen and lived through in a different way, yet still accepted as valid and meaningful. We have the reverse path of negation, which Hegel does not proceed to explain directly, but which follows with necessity: negation going downward. From the absolute to the finite, the concrete, placed in appearance; the opposite path of the phenomenology: to the details, the twilight, the weight. Thinking accepts negation and takes on the burden of the forms, which it has passed before.

And it is precisely this way back, this turning down towards limitation that distinguishes Hegel from Fichte and Schelling. Hegel recognises, in order of appearance, the forms of existence, of actuality; he adopts them because of their origin and internal status, the absolute totality which stands within them. This is not a matter of choice; absolute knowledge remains enclosed in its human form, and has to return to it by the power of logical necessity. Sublation (*Aufhebung*) is the movement upward; in its way down it is reconciliation (*Versöhnung*). The very same movement runs through the forms of consciousness, and this is the other, not emphasised half of the circle as the absolute form of the system.

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3. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 366.



Before it can be conceptualised, it happens: the end comes suddenly, with the quiet cessation of the drive in mid-air of one soaring spirit after another, seeing infinite possibilities, feeling capable of anything. The ending of Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* resembles a biography of the spirit, a recount of the chronicle of the philosophy of idealism.<sup>4</sup> Novalis receives half a page. Fichte himself is a history, and the boundless energy of his mind is left to be represented by a series of introductions in the *Wissenschaftslehre*: repetitions of the attempt for laying of the foundation, which never finds its true final form. Precisely this—form—is given by Hegel. The system goes beyond the dimensions reached by Schelling, but this attainment of the form and its perfection is a work of conclusion. In the beginning it has no such importance, and even in Kant the text of the first critique is laden with repetitions, small circles in the exposition, defining and redefining concepts and themes. The work on the form begins when the movement has ceased, when one begins to accept the givenness of the grasped here and now and feels the desire for completion, a circle, an end. The movement ahead does not seek it; it seeks itself, i.e., the freedom of knowledge.

In fact Hegel remains alone; the moment has passed; the late-comer assumes the reigns, and what has been a communal effort, intimacy of transcendence and self-affirmation disappears. At the time Hegel published his last book *Philosophy of Right* everything seems to have settled down. The political passions, the violent swings of history had calmed down in a staled form of mediocrity, half-new, half-old form of normality, of peace. Napoleon is a banished memory, and the entire promise of the epoch seems to have been lived through and exhausted; what begins is the hardening of the spirit, the objectifying of the forms; enter 'the night thoughts' in the suggestive title of H. S. Harris.<sup>5</sup>

That is why the end of *Philosophy of Right*—the final paragraph there to which we will return at our own ending—contains all the various impulses of the movement: the audacity of the claim on the absolute, the affirmation of totality, the pedantic enumeration of forms of actuality, the system of the spirit in all its dimensions with

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4. A twist typical of Hegel's typologies: Schelling wrote another history of philosophy, when Hegel was no more; the issue of the last word, of the true completion, still undecided.

5. H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

the principle of negation, the thesis of reconciliation with reality and history, with the essence of the human spirit and of philosophy itself. Philosophy is knowledge; in its pure form it reaches the absolute—an absolute—and yet remains only that: knowledge, truth enclosed in pure thought, which grasps everything but cannot change it by itself.

2.

Before we conclude we must turn to one more question: the question about Spinoza. The great drama of German idealism is not in bringing the finite to the infinite and the entry in absolute knowledge, it lies in the opposite way: in bringing the infinite to the finite. The final achievement destroys the expectations of what would be possible through this knowledge, the great expectations of freedom. Here I will not involve Goethe's *Faust* because the comparison would go too far, but the problem there too is related to the ambiguity of what really lies outside the bounds of experience, the familiar structures of understanding and the homely contradictions of reason shown by the antinomies of Kant.

Individual consciousness and the very tradition of thinking are not ready for what actually happens, for what has been achieved and revealed. Hence, when speaking about the absolute, Schelling turns to a prototype which alone seems to provide a clearer articulation of his own position, i.e., to Spinoza. To be sure, it would be easy to bring the discussion in a different direction and list the points of opposition between Kant and Spinoza or Fichte and Spinoza since the texts on this are plentiful. Still, the thesis of many historians that everything begins with the discussion of Jacobi and Lessing on Spinoza holds true. From then on the issue about Spinoza hovers over the most salient places in the philosophical conceptions of Kant, Fichte, Schelling where it is done most openly, and in Hegel.

This issue concerns the core of the transcendental idea, the sense of ideal and idealism. What does absolute knowledge actually mean? There seem to be many positions from which to develop the subjects of such knowledge: God, immortality, freedom. In this enterprise theses are easily produced. The terms are familiar; one could bring in images and notions and revert to the abundant material of thought to put up semblances of theories, arguments, etc. But in Spinoza things stand differently; he is concerned not with the subject matter but with the type of knowledge, with the

absolute cognition itself. Only within it, from it, there is a talk of different themes, questions, divisions. That is why the question about Spinoza cannot be solved in advance. Here one has to either deny the possibility of such knowledge or declare incompetence to discuss the issue at all, since only entering in this other type of knowledge could make a discussion possible. A conversation cannot be held in mutually unrecognisable tongues. So to deal with Spinoza one has to know the language and have familiarity with the intellectual experience which he refers to. And this could explain why the discussion with Spinoza often goes unnoticed in the texts, despite the fact that it appears at the most important places and centres in an invisible way the internal movements of the systems.

This is not unlike a game of chess, when one competes against a strategy that seems impregnable many steps ahead, and against which one has to improvise. A kind of Spinoza defence, or attack. To be sure, there is not much to be gained by absolutising Spinoza as an author; what is at stake here is rather the specific type of philosophical position that he develops and which relates him to Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, etc. They are those for whom the theme exists, who share the experience, master the language. When Kant develops his critique, he joins this discussion and builds his stand in reference to it.

Everything comes down to this: the only way to understand the human being and approach the issue of human knowledge and freedom is to view it from an absolutist perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*. Without the projection of such a point of view, it seems impossible even to think of the possibility of solution. Nothing can be satisfactorily elucidated in relative distances; one must seek the centre, the true and final measure. Everything else is description, parable, reflection, or observation, not comprehension. In this sense, the role of Kant in this discussion is ambiguous. On the one hand, he rejects the attainability of such a position, the possibility of absolute knowledge and of authentic progress outside experience. Accessible is only what can be reached by stepping on intuitions (*Anschauungen*, at-looks), up to the point which they themselves reach. Reason can use only those stepping stones in order to constitute knowledge and extend its principles. The path for progress is in the sciences, in the limited cognition of selected spheres of givenness. As for the primary foundation and the metaphysical essence behind actuality, we could have only the projection lines that mark the eventual

completion and show the ground which ought to be thought of as being there.

Yet along with this, Kant develops the critique in a perspective which cannot be called anything but absolutist. It is impossible to conceive the mere possibility of a complete reconstruction of the working of consciousness and a transcendental analytics of thinking and of entire possible experience, without the idea of absolute firmness and validity of the transcendental view-point. The idea of apodicticity and universality of what is derived in the critical analysis is by itself proof that Kant places himself in the position of a third type of knowledge—of the kind described by Spinoza—using it in order to investigate the other two: sensuous knowledge (transcendental aesthetics) and intellectual knowledge (transcendental analytics and dialectics).

The last we can presume about this critique is that it starts from a relative truth, that the denoted elements of the structure of cognition could be better seen from another angle or viewed more accurately by another critique. The critique is one; its findings are absolute; the deconstruction of the synthetic unity of cognition (intuition/concept) could be accomplished only from the perspective of a consciousness which stands above this doubleness and could observe it in detail, as if under a microscope, before assembling it to reconstruct its mode of functioning. The whole meaning of the critique is in the analysis of the confinement, the sensibility, and schematism of our acts of cognition: schematism of perception, of feeling, of construction of representations.

Confinement, finitude, human, only human knowledge, truths, half-truths, imagery: How does one distinguish this? Not, it seems, by remaining inside the representations and the duality (duplicity), which Kant underlies so forcefully, or in repetition of the moves of dialectics along the metaphysical corridors of thinking.

There is something consciously concealed here, something that stands as an allusion, a sign read by all but accepted as part of the picture, a natural element of the construction. Is it? Is it really necessary for Kant to speak so much of a moral principle which must be valid absolutely not only for us, but for 'all rational beings'? Would it really be so difficult to follow his thought if there were fewer repetitions of the expression 'human' knowledge, 'our manner' of cognition, as if we know any other and are capable of making comparisons? What does the notion of 'all rational beings' do for an

inquiry of metaphysics within the limits of reason alone, a painstaking analysis of the main philosophical principles and concepts, and the very origins of this science? What does this class of rational beings actually mean? How do we have the representation or the intuition we need to justify such references since everything has to be reduced to empiricity (experience)? Kant has begun his philosophical career with a drastic attack on Svendeborg, but then, what is at stake here?

And finally, most important of all: the references to an intellectual intuition and a non-discursive, absolute intellect, towards which consciousness is referred to in order to be understood. Image and likeness, of a limited type. This is not such a construct, or else it would turn the transcendental analysis into a game of the faculty of imagination. Kant uses intellectual intuition and relies on it, not simply as an operative concept, but as a centre from which to structure the entire critique; only in this manner pure reason, experience and sensibility could become an object and a subject-matter seen in its totality, studied and described. In this sense, the argument of Hegel against Kant is encoded in the very making of the critique. The postulating of finitude does take it away; it is, equally, reaffirmation of infinity, and that is why, in a peculiar way, the entire critique of pure reason could be viewed as an exercise in Spinozism or Platonism, or such ‘-ism’ which consists in every view which articulates absolute knowledge, employs or implements it, and finds itself in it.

One more visual example. The myth of the cave of Plato is a parable of the limitations, the levels of truthfulness and freedom, and the principal possibilities and impossibilities of knowledge. It offers a transition between three vantage points: bottom, behind the wall, and outside the cave; and only there does the account of limitation, visibility (*Anschauung*), appearance, necessary illusion, need, and compulsory ignorance—to employ Kant’s expressions—receive its meaning. So when Kant cleanses metaphysics, he does not do away with God, but with the validity of the notion of God as it is projected in the mind and built in the representation. ‘It is void. Nothing could be deduced from it in this manner.’ And yet the tone is optimistic, coupled with the confidence in the assertion of freedom and the power of the moral law. Kant clears the representations of the God which were supposed to support the moral law, but this applies for all other representations as well: the ones about the

limitations of reality and the absolute power of a material world that makes us cruel and fearful, subjects to that other, natural law proposed by Hobbes. Ignorance and fear are born twins.

The weakening of the notions of the immediacy of the things as things in themselves which press us and impose a strategy of survival, of war, takes away fear as well. The visible, experience, could incorporate freedom; only illusion makes us un-free. Natural law is the law of the visible, not of the real; one could verify that through a voluntary act of freedom, which will adopt the forms of appearance, and take place as an event in reality. It will accept its forms, and yet will not belong to its causality. Reality is not a barrier; it is a form, visibility, organisation of the event, not of its causes. Thus freedom is a *Ding an sich*, verified in reason, in the act and the appearances it generates.

Therefore, it is precisely this moment of freedom that becomes the primary ground of theorising in the post-critical period. Fichte turns the reality of freedom into a ground for the return to the theme of the absolute and the axiomatic nature of truth. Freedom is intellectual intuition, *causa sui*, the thing which is conceived through itself and 'that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception'.<sup>6</sup> Fichte brings nearer the opposite forms of reason. Transcendental philosophy does not produce metaphysics; it does not define the 'materiality' of the 'absolute object', God. Nevertheless, it affirms it, without images, constructions, formal proofs. This is still knowledge, sublation of the constraints, truth. And for this reason Schelling could not but attempt to apply the same principle in the sphere of nature, and see it at work there, recuperating the second part of the formulation *Deus sive Natura*. The look inside the progress of natural sciences with the possession of this ground gives the certainty of the thesis that every true philosophy is Spinozism, a thesis which allows the utilisation of Kant, and the adoption of his entire critical analysis.

Hegel could be understood only in the perspective of this attempted equation of Kant and Spinoza. Absolute knowledge is given with the terminology and principles of transcendental philosophy; the synthesis of the two makes the proper determination of transcendental idealism. In this sphere of transparency many things remain unclear. Schelling articulates the totality and interrelation of everything, the principles of construction of the whole.

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6. Spinoza, *Ethics* I, definition 3.

Hegel introduces movement, activity and life in the principle, but seems to stumble when confronted with the main issue emerging in the aftermath of absolute knowledge. What happens with freedom? With my freedom? With me, myself?

3.

The truth is: not much because what changes is the very idea of freedom, the notions attached to it, the hopes, the longing. All that, the entire conceptual framework of the concept of freedom, belongs to a lower level of consideration, of the practical idea with its projection of one-sidedness and subjectivism. Only there the question posed in this way is related with excitement, an impulse to act, to enter battles, to conquer. The endless succession of repetitions of the virtues of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) in the *Philosophy of Right* confirms something else: the level of the absolute idea, the view towards freedom from the point of synthesis of theoretical and practical. The affirmation reads: the good already is, it is actual, alive. Freedom is life; it has become and becomes right, in its external side—laws and institutions, in the internal—ethical code, adopted as a natural way of the organisation of individual and social life. The fervour of the thrust for freedom, the longing for it, is denounced directly both in the logic (as ‘*Synthese des Strebenes*’)<sup>7</sup> and in the *Philosophy of Right*. Thought separated from passion and the will of self-affirmation sees the only true power of affirmation, the power of the spirit, the world-historical spirit, who triumphs in history. In a sense, this is a gesture towards Spinoza and the conception exposed by him: only God is, there is nothing but God, and everything that occurs appears as independent only in the perspective of limitation. In the words of Schelling quoted earlier, ‘every limitation occurs with the act of self-consciousness’.

Self-consciousness obscures the view of the whole. It confines one to a temporary centre of totality and a presentation of a world, which can only be relative; part of a sequence of existence in which every being is a centre and a world in itself, and in which, once again by the power of subjectivity, it finds itself limited, and therefore seeking release, expansion, freedom. Thus to a relative totality corresponds a relative freedom and a relative truth. The reaching of the foundation—the turning to oneself in thought—removes the determination of this self-consciousness and takes place both with

7. Synthesis of striving. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 825.

and without the consciousness, *noesis noeseos*. The attained gives a different idea of freedom: relentless, indifferent, imperial. Freedom that is contemplated, not willed, freedom which does not move in the veins as anger, or love of justice, will for an intelligible order, the city of heaven here and now.

A second parallel with Spinoza, again not so much as an author but as an exponent of a position which is periodically revived in philosophy concerns his solitude and the impossibility to share that universal knowledge, that closed absolute cognition. The later Hegel does not try to explain, but rather to follow the strategy of Kant and logically induce the representation and the drive for metaphysics to narrow down their pretensions; an effort that reminds one of Fichte and his attempt 'to force the reader to understand'. Kant almost does not attempt to do that; for him more important is the deconstruction of the illusion of authenticity. Truth cannot be communicated; its universality does not imply accessibility. It simply has almost nothing to step on, neither in intuition, nor in the notions of ordinary consciousness, while the remaining third way is narrow and has always been such. One can communicate only the visible emptiness of the *Vorstellung* and show the vagueness that passes for truth, so that everyone, can seek in oneself the formula and build the path to the consciousness which will carry one over the functioning whole of the matrix of experience.

*Das ist Aufklärung*, a strategy for Enlightenment and for a dialogue which must have succeeded since it has managed to draw many of the brightest minds of a generation, precisely with its capacity to suggest further perspectives, open spaces for autonomous movement. In this sense, Fichte's work does not come accidentally. Despite its stated principal completion, the critique suggests steps which it does not make; it leaves indications, pointers, consciously concealing the full meaning of the effect. Enlightenment requires freedom of the individual movement to universality and one's own way of reaching maturity. The preliminary announcement of the result would block the way to it; that is why Kant puts forward the entire trajectory, the issues and the possible obstacles, presenting the critique in a way making it similar to a drawing which does not hide the traces of elaboration and correction.

This process of discovery, of walking paths already marked could be seen in the works of Fichte, in the breakthroughs of Schelling and the systematising drive of Hegel, although there one



begins to feel the presence of a boundary, the signs of exhausting a possibility. Going ahead, the movement begins to yield more and more indistinct formulations, which it does not have the power to overcome;<sup>8</sup> much like a dove which does not know that it makes no advance in the empty space of the understanding ...<sup>9</sup>

In fact Hegel sees that and demonstrates it clearly in the logic in the manner in which he lays out the absolute idea. Without passion, signs of ecstasy, or outbursts of inspiration; rather as an explication of the method by means of which one has gone there, elaboration of the proper understanding of the movement and the conceptual stages deduced by it in relation to the whole. Precisely this manner of exposition shows more than any other kinds of argumentation the final proximity of Hegel to Kant.

The boundary is there, and the forced entanglement in it compels the investigation to turn back to the 'visible things', under the circle of light and the spheres of relativity, where one can distinguish forms, and so think, because there is limitation, contact with intuition and duality. Precisely this moment is captured by De Vos and the others who speak of the minimising, sceptic Hegel!<sup>10</sup> who gives only what is contained within the concept, displaying the levels of formation in it; and if this means idealism, then it is idealism of apodicticity of the logical deduction of the meaning of the concept and intelligibility in general.<sup>143</sup>

But what seems to be missed out here is that this scepticism is acquired, not primary; that the first movement is different, so that the apodicticity of the result is received in a peculiar manner. In Hegel there is none of Kant's calm, almost playful tone when speaking of ignorance and the necessity of a civilised abstention from relapse into illusions and metaphysical states of mind. Hegel

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8. This could be seen in the logic, the lectures on the philosophy of religion—which could not offer more than a theoretical scheme, which has problems to accommodate the incoming new material about the Hindu religion—or, in the *Philosophy of Right* which gives the almost physical sensation for the weakening of speculative vision, until in the end it is capable only of descriptions of reality, of the notions carried by ordinary consciousness, supported here and there with the contours of a speculative frames. See L. De Vos, 'Die Logik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie: Eine Vermutung', in *Hegel-Studien*, Band 16, Bonn: Bouvier und Herber Grundmann, 99–121 and K. H. Ilting, 'The Structure of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', 91–110.

9. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 47.

10. Heyde, *De verwerkelijking van de vrijheid*, 91–92.

has always opposed this tone, this assertion, showing that for the truth one must speak in a different way, that it requires a different attitude, effort, dedication. That is why his coming to the same result, this coming to Kant again, is not predetermined, not part of the plan.

The limitations described by Kant are implicit. They manifest themselves inwardly, in the investigation itself, saturating its movement and finally containing it in itself. Indeed, one goes beyond the declared results of Kant, but remains in his spirit. What is attained is beyond this boundary, and yet lies close to it, caught in the dialectics of the limit.<sup>11</sup>

The logic discovers freedom but this freedom is not human; it cannot be used. The consciousness of it runs through the system, the foundations, the transitions. The logical concept closes the circle in immediacy. The end is given within the dimensions of the whole and the embodied consciousness which—with the system, with philosophy—goes a certain way, experiences the world and reaches the understanding of itself.

So at the end—of the application, of the system—the logic sounds as high poetry, as epos.

Indem—in dem harten Kampfe dieser im Unterschiede, der hier seine absolute Entgegensetzung gewonnen, stehenden und zugleich einer Einheit und Idee wurzelnden Reiche—das Geistliche die Existenz seines Himmels zum irdischen Diesseits und zur gemeinen Weltlichkeit, in der Wirklichkeit und in der Vortstellung, degradiert, das Weltliche dagegen sein abstraktes Fürischsein zum Gerdanken und dem Prinzipie vernünftigen Seins und Wissens, zur Vernünftigkeit des Rechts und Gesetz hinaufbildet, ist an sich der Gegensatz zur marklosen Getsalt geschwunden; die Gegenwart hat ihre Barbarei und unrechtliliche Willkür, und die Wahtheit hat ihr Jenseits und ihre zufällige Gewalt abgetsreift, so daß die wahrhafte Versöhnung objektiv

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11. We negate Kant and plunge ahead, negate Schelling and with an adjustment of his conception make one step further. Then we stop; negation has nothing to step on; what is left is only the imposing clarity of the movement in negativity in the space of remaining positivity. The alternative is a negation put forward as self-negation, a reversal of the system, or its self-sublation; this is unthinkable. This is precisely the limit, the boundary which Hegel accepts for himself. The system cannot be compromised; the method is not liable to negation. Reversal and negativity are allowed within certain boundaries. The truth *must* be within them.

geworden, welche den Staat zum Bilde und zur Wirklichkeit der Vernunft entfaltet, worin das Selbstbewußtsein die Wirklichkeit seines substantiellen Wissens and Wollens in organischen Entwicklung, wie in Religion das Gefühl und die Vorstellung dieser seiner Wahrheit als idealer Wesenheit, in der Wissenschaft aber die freie begriffene Erkenntnis dieser Wahrheit als seiner und derselben in ihren sich ergänzenden Manifestationen, dem Staate, der Natur und der ideellen Welt, findet.<sup>12</sup>

The accomplished reconciliation—not joy, not love—has been reached before, in other forms, other realities and times. It is not they, but the very understanding of negativity and the tensions between the poles of human existence, that gives the knowledge which becomes reconciliation (*Versöhnung*). Reconciliation not with the poles, because in that there is no choice, but with oneself, incompleteness and death.

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12. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 360: 'In as far as, in the hard struggle of these—standing in difference, gaining its absolute opposition, and simultaneously rooted in one unity and idea—realms, the spiritual has degraded the existence of its heaven to earthly this-sidedness and to common worldliness, in the actuality and representation; the worldly, on the other side, has built up its abstract for itself to thought and to principle of rational being and knowing, to rationality of right and law, the contradiction has disappeared to a markless form. The present has discarded its barbarity and un-rightful caprice, and the truth—its beyond and its accidental power—so that the true reconciliation becomes objective, which unfolds the state as image and to actuality of reason, where self-consciousness finds the actuality of its substantial knowing and willing in organic development, as in religion the feeling and the representation of this, its truth as ideal essentiality, in science but the free conceived comprehension of this truth as one and the same in its self-complimentary manifestations, the state, nature, and the ideal world'.





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